

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

**Remarks Following a Dinner With Members of Parliament in Canberra,
Australia**

November 16, 2011

Well, Prime Minister Gillard and Leader Abbott, thank you both for your wonderfully warm words. And I thank you for showing that in Canberra, as in Washington, people may not always see eye to eye, but on this we are all united: There are no better friends than the United States and Australia.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, and distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am going to be brief, for we have had a busy day. I am not sure what day it is. *[Laughter]* And I'm going to subject you to a very long speech tomorrow.

But I do want to express my deep appreciation for the way you've welcomed me here today. I know that I am not the first guy from Chicago to come to these parts. A century ago, Walter Burley Griffin came here with a vision for this city. He said, "I have planned a city that is not like any other in the world." And tonight I want to thank all of you and the people of Australia for the hospitality that is unlike any other in the world.

Our toasts earlier tonight reminded me of a story. It's from our troops—this is true story—our troops serving together in Afghanistan. Our guys, the Americans, couldn't figure out why your guys were always talking about cheese, all day long, morning, noon, and night. Why are the Aussies always talking about cheese? And then finally they realized, it was their Australian friends just saying hello, just saying cheers. *[Laughter]*

So we Americans and Australians, we may not always speak the same way or use the same words, but I think it's pretty clear, especially from the spirit of this visit and our time together this evening, that we understand each other. And we see the world in the same way, even if we do have to disagree on the merits of vegemite. *[Laughter]*

As many of you know, I first came to Australia as a child. But despite my visits, I have to admit I never did learn to talk "Strine." I know there is some concern here that your Australian language is being Americanized. So perhaps it's time for us to reverse the trend. Tonight, with your permission, I'd like to give it a burl. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank the Prime Minister for a very productive meeting that we had today. I think she'll agree it was a real chinwag. *[Laughter]* When Julia and I meet, we listen to each other, we learn from each other. It's not just a lot of earbashing. *[Laughter]* That's a good one—earbashing. *[Laughter]* I can use that in Washington, because there's a lot of earbashing sometimes. *[Laughter]*

That's been the story of our two nations. Through a century of progress and struggle, we have stood together, in good times and in bad. We've faced our share of sticky wickets. *[Laughter]* In some of our darkest moments—when our countries have been threatened, when we needed a friend to count on—we've always been there for each other: at Darwin, at Midway, after 9/11, and after Bali.

It's that moment, in the midst of battle, when the bullets are flying and the outcome is uncertain, when Americans and Aussies look over at each other, knowing that we've got each other's backs, knowing in our hearts, "No worries, she'll be right." *[Laughter]*

And so tonight, as we mark 60 years of this remarkable alliance, through war and peace, hardship and prosperity, we gather together among so many friends who sustain the bonds between us, and we can say with confidence and with pride: The alliance between the United States and Australia is deeper and stronger than it has ever been, spot on—[laughter]—cracker jack—[laughter]—in top nick. [Laughter]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:09 p.m. at Parliament House. In his remarks, he referred to Leader of the Opposition Anthony J. Abbot, Speaker of the House of Representatives Henry A. "Harry" Jenkins, and President of the Senate John J. Hogg of Australia.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Australia :: Dinner with Parliament Members in Canberra.

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