

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia
October 25, 2023

President Biden. Please have a seat. Thank you.

Well, good evening, everyone. The Prime Minister and I and Jodie and members of the Australian delegation, distinguished guests: Jill and I are honored to welcome you tonight to celebrate the historic bonds between our two nations that's been going on for 72 years now.

An alliance, during World War II, more than 150,000 American troops based in Australia to fight in the Pacific Theater. And to ensure they were prepared to navigate Down Under, they—each one of them was given a manual entitled—and here's what it was entitled, "Instructions for American Servicemen in Australia." I'd like to read it. *[Laughter]*

Prime Minister Albanese. It could be dangerous.

President Biden. Not all of the tips hold up today, but I thought one of them was pretty good, and this is a quote from it: "You'll find the Australians . . . haven't much respect for stuffed shirts, their own or anyone else's." *[Laughter]* Well, I've learned that my trip Down Under as well as becoming friends with the Prime Minister. No wonder we get along so well. *[Laughter]*

Another tip from the manual not only stands out but stands up, quote: "Australians have been in all the hotspots wherever the going—whenever the going has been tough." End of quote. And that's a fact, they have been.

You know, that commitment—*[applause]*. That commitment to face tough challenges, that courage to fight for a better future, that's what's always brought America and Australia together.

I saw this growing up with my grandfather, Ambrose Finnegan, who lost his son in the Pacific in World War II. He would literally straighten his shoulders every time Australia—the country of Australia—was mentioned. He'd just straighten up, straighten his shoulders.

I saw it when my own son—Major Beau Biden in the National Guard, spent a year in Iraq—told me how he could always count on Aussies to have his back. That's a fact. That's what he had said; he meant it.

And you know, that Ode Remembrance promise: "At the going down of the Sun and in the morning, we will remember them." Period. Look, folks, today that bond first forged on the battlefield has grown to capture the full range of human ingenuity. Australian and American workers are building the future together. Australians and American students are innovating together. Australian and American engineers are working together to support *Artemis* missions to return human beings to the Moon and from there to Mars.

And, as I saw when I visited Australia in 2016, Australians and Americans are driving cutting-edge research to end cancer as we know it—and we will—research that has only grown with Australia teams recently mapping 949 cancer cell lines across 40 types of cancers.

Ladies and gentlemen, a great deal of the history of our world will be written in the Indo-Pacific in the coming years. Australia and the United States must—must—write that story together.

We must continue to advance freedom, security, and prosperity for all; continue the vital work in both our nations of building strong partnerships, of upholding nation-to-nation commitments and—to Native peoples; continue to defend the values of great democracies—

freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom from fear; and continue to build a future worthy of our highest hopes even when it's tough—especially when it's tough. For we know that's when it matters the most.

Mr. Prime Minister, today our two nations meet the future, emboldened with a confidence all that's come before. That's what built our confidence: all that has brought us here and all that Australia and America are—innovative, courageous, loyal, unwavering, bold of heart, and resolute of spirit. Determined that tomorrow will be better than today. It will be the most—it will be more than just. It will be more free, more fair, and for all people, because we have the power to make it so.

So please join me if I can get a glass——

[At this point, President Biden was handed a glass.]

Here you go. *[Laughter]* Please join me in a toast.

To our partnership, our mateship, and the future that we'll create together. Cheers.

[President Biden offered a toast.]

Audience members. Cheers.

President Biden. Mr. Prime Minister, the floor is yours.

Prime Minister Albanese. Well, thank you very much to Mr. President and First Lady Dr. Biden.

I must say I only have one regret about tonight, which is I'm not quite sure how I top this for date night with Jodie—*[laughter]*—at any time, anywhere in the future. *[Laughter]* It's all downhill from here, my darling. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a world that does keep changing. Yet one thing that keeps the ground firm beneath us is the great constant that is the American spirit.

America has never been held back by the unknown or slowed by trepidation. You stride boldly towards the future, excited by all of its possibility. In every field of human endeavor, your nation is energized by a ceaseless curiosity and the confidence to follow it.

It is a spirit that Australians identify with. With a small population, but a very big imagination, we punch above our weight, all the while drawing inspiration from our friends across the Pacific. We stand as close as we have ever been and, I think, after this week, closer than we have ever been.

We are firm allies strengthening defense cooperation through AUKUS and creating more economic opportunities for our peoples and our region. Australians are always ready to play our part. Most importantly, our nations are close friends, friends who admire each other's qualities. I think we get each other.

And President Biden and I had our first meeting before I'd even selected, of course, a Cabinet. I was elected on the Saturday. And by Monday, I was off to the Quad leaders meeting. And I do want to thank the President for your warm welcome and that rather extraordinary beginning on the front foot in those first days of my government.

Friends who draw strength from all we have in common, but we take joy in our differences as well. Friends who look to the future together without losing sight of the moments in the past that bind us together.

Mr. President speaking as one man with Irish ancestry to another—although I am also, of course, half Italian, so you don't have to guess my religion—*[laughter]*—I know you won't object

to me quoting a Dubliner. The familiar words of William Butler Yeats, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold," are now more than a century old. Yet they speak to us just as clearly now as the long contest between democracy and authoritarianism plays out its newest chapter.

But to capture the essence of the bond between our two nations in all of its warmth and its easy strength, I turned to another of his poems: "Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends."

So allow me to make a toast to such friends, because Australia has no greater friend than the United States of America. So, to the President and First Lady, to the history our peoples have made together, but importantly, the future we will build together as a peoples.

To friendship.

[Prime Minister Albanese offered a toast.]

Prime Minister Albanese. Thank you, my friend.

President Biden. Thank you.

Enjoy your meal.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 p.m. on the South Lawn of the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Albanese's partner Jodie Haydon. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 26.

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