Speech

Address By

Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

On the occasion of

Australian American Leadership Dialogue Morning Tea

Admiralty House, Sydney
12 August 2013

Your Excellency

Distinguished guests

My friends

Thank you all for coming here this morning at the conclusion of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue.

After speaking to many of you, it’s clear that this has been another rewarding Dialogue.

Watching the nightly news in Australia, you would be excused for thinking that the only thing that matters in the relationship between our two countries is the value of the US dollar.

But as important as that is, particularly to Australia’s exporters right now, you understand that there are more important matters, and many complex issues that have to be dealt with.

That economically, as dominant as the American economy is, there are forces and trends in other countries - such as China, the other BRICS or in Europe – that can have an enormous impact on the health and growth of our own financial systems and economies.

You also understand, for example, the growing impact of energy, water or concern for the environment on our future: and the need to grasp these issues in a global context.

The success of the dialogue is reflected in your commitment to it.
The breadth and depth of experience in this room this morning attests to the nature of this event – and how valuable it is to our two countries.

Of course there are similar private gatherings elsewhere in the world, but I doubt many would be conducted with such a wide range of professions and backgrounds represented -

and in such an air of creative informality as with your grouping.

One of the strengths of the Dialogue is the ability for you all to speak freely, to discuss ideas, and to challenge each other – without the risk of having those views and discussions represented – or misrepresented – in the media.

Yet you have a presence of significant opinion makers and people from the media all here and contributing and adding great value to your deliberations – and ultimately to our more sophisticated understanding of the relationship.

Exactly 12 months before I was born Prime Minister John Curtin unequivocally aligned Australia’s interests and destiny to the United States of America.

Australians and Americans have stood together in every major military engagement since World War 1.

Our world view is similar.

Our values are shared.

Our economies never more open to each other since the Free Trade Agreement.

And through modern communications, film, television, education and travel, our peoples have come to know each other better than any generation that went before.

Yet this immediacy and closeness poses a challenge for us and for the Dialogue.

Because with it comes a familiarity – the type that breeds drift and allows us to take the relationship for granted.

This is why I believe the relationship always works best when it has an agenda pursued jointly by both Australia and the United States.
In a complex world we mustn’t rely on self-congratulatory exhortations of warmth and friendship.

These are shallow and quickly become meaningless.

Ours is a dynamic, robust relationship – and one that comes to life when we work together on things that are greater than ourselves – whether this be in a bilateral, regional or global basis.

May I congratulate everyone involved in bringing this dialogue to Sydney.

I wish it every continued success.

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