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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australia and the Netherlands

SPEECH

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Page 4676
Questioner
Speaker Perrett, Graham, MP

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Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:51): Yes, I second the motion by the member for Forde. In seconding the motion by the member for Forde about the Declaration of Intent on a Strategic Dialogue Between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I recognise that longstanding connection between the Australian people and the Dutch people. I particularly mention the member for Forde with his background in Holland. Also, coming from Brisbane, I note that the Brisbane Roar have connections with the Dutch community and wear the colours of the Dutch community, something that my granddad, with his Irish background, probably would not be as keen on. But modern-day Australia is a mix of many people, and I commend the member for Forde on this motion and his support for football in another capacity as well.

Obviously that close relationship between Australia and the Netherlands is grounded in many of the things that we hold sacred, democracy being a strong connection but also support for human rights and free trade—the Dutch having a long history of being a trading nation—and rules-based international order. And I note that the Dutch have always been prepared to put on a blue beret in support of world peace and have often served with Australian service personnel in parts of the world that are far from Holland and Australia.

Earlier this month, we were honoured to welcome their Majesties the King and Queen of the Netherlands during their state visit to Australia. I note that they were accompanied by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Bert Koenders. It is all about ensuring that we take every trade and economic opportunity possible with our connections to Europe. I am sure the more than 300,000 Australians who claim Dutch heritage are supportive of that, and this new declaration of intent, as detailed by the member for Forde, builds on this already close relationship between Australia and the Netherlands, a connection that in Queensland goes back to 1606, when the United East India Company ship *Duyfken* first made contact with the Indigenous people of Australia—the oldest civilisation in the world making contact with some of the world's best traders back in 1606 up at Mapoon.

The other connection, a little bit later, was on 25 October 1616 in Western Australia in Shark Bay, where Dirk Hartog made contact on his ship, the *Eendracht*, on an island now called Dirk Hartog Island, although the Indigenous people of Western Australia probably called it something else for 30,000 or 40,000 years beforehand. It is a 620-kilometre square island. When Dirk Hartog and a couple of the dignitaries on board nailed a pewter plate to the post, arguably under some law they were making a claim to that land, although I think some British gunboats later down the track might have said that they did not recognise that claim. But there was that suggestion that Dirk Hartog, who had actually been blown off course, was perhaps appeasing some of the paying members of his ship by saying, 'Yeah, yeah—here's your name on a pewter plate.' I think it has actually ended up in a museum in Holland, recognising that connection.

In more recent times the Dutch have been the fourth-largest source of foreign direct investment in Australia. And we still have that healthy two-way trading relationship of over \$6 billion. Obviously, there is much potential for us to explore: there is the Dutch-speaking community in Australia and the Dutch heritage, whether that be through people like the member for Forde, which makes connections with Europe. Obviously, we have many products that can be sold into Europe through the ports of Holland.

Tragically, we are also bonded over other aspects, such as looking for the victims who were in the tragic downing of MH 17. But it goes back beyond that to when many Australians opened their doors to the Dutch who had been devastated by World War II. Many took the time and had the courage to get on a ship and come to the other side of the world, and helped to make multicultural Australia a stronger place. I know that I have a very strong Dutch community, and I am sure that this new declaration will build on the already close relationship between our two nations.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): There being no further speakers, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.