Mr Roland Rich opens the CDI Special Address by Mr Mikhail Gorbachev

Your Excellency, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev; The Honourable Alexander Downer; Vice-Chancellor, Professor Deane Terrell; honourable members and senators; excellencies; ladies and gentlemen. My name is Roland Rich. I am the foundation director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions and I am delighted to be here welcoming you today to what I hope will be a very special event.

We are very excited about hosting Mr Mikhail Gorbachev today, and I know from the responses that we have received that our excitement is widely shared. By having Mr Gorbachev here we are able to listen to a towering figure of twentieth century history. He shares the platform with two individuals who are very important to the work of my Centre. Professor Deane Terrell as Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University has given the Centre all the support we could ask for. We have received tremendous intellectual energy and enthusiasm from the ANU, and we feed off that in our work. We have also received support from the Asia Research Centre of Murdoch University in the west, which is our partner body.

Also sitting on the stage is the Honourable Alexander Downer, the Foreign Minister, and of course it is the Minister's vision that led to the formation of CDI. We in the Centre are trying to translate that vision into reality.

The Centre is funded by AusAID to assist developing countries with their good governance needs. But it is our view that we cannot achieve that aim unless we establish a two-way flow of information, and that is why we are determined to bring to Australia, and have speak at the Parliament, individuals that can help us to understand the world's needs in this field.

The order of proceedings today will be as follows: I will invite Professor Terrell to give some welcoming comments and then the Foreign Minister to introduce the keynote speaker. Mr Gorbachev will speak in Russian with consecutive translation by Mr Pavel Palajchenko. Mr Gorbachev has then graciously agreed to answer questions for a few minutes. At around 1.30pm we will adjourn for lunch at the back of the Mural Hall.

So may I call on first Professor Terrell and then Mr Downer.