

**Opening Statement for The Honorable David Brat
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Australia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 20, 2026**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to be nominated as United States Ambassador to the Commonwealth of Australia.

President Trump and Secretary Rubio have called upon diplomats to be champions for the American people above all else. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will ensure American interests and American citizens always come first.

First, I want to thank President Trump for the incredible honor of representing him and the United States in Australia. Second, I want to thank Secretary Rubio for the incredible team he has shaped at State and for the crucial support I have received all the way through. Finally, I want to thank my loving wife Laura for her strength and courage as we face another great journey together.

I also want to say a personal hello to Australia on this big day. I love everything about your country. I am a tennis fanatic and follow your pros, the Open, and of course, the game of PM Albanese! I'm looking forward to sports diplomacy across the board. I love the Australian people I have met in life and appreciate their decency, wit, and sense of humor above all. As Aristotle said, true friends must pursue similar ends and goals, and we do. We share the same values of life, liberty and happiness.

The U.S. lost 160,000 who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the great Pacific Wars of WWII to gain a maritime foothold and ensure free navigation for the next generations. Australia has been with us every step of the way with loyal friendship and courage. If confirmed, I am very excited to build great friendships with you in person.

Few countries are as integral to U.S. interests as Australia, as evidenced by the broad bipartisan support for the Alliance. A longstanding treaty Ally, Five Eye partner, AUKUS, and Quad member, our partnership with Australia makes America "safer, stronger, and more prosperous."

Our relationship with Australia under this Administration is deepening. During the President's meeting last October with Prime Minister Albanese, our leaders charted a course to take the Alliance to new heights.

Building on that historic summit, I see opportunities to advance our priorities in three areas:

- 1) critical minerals and commercial diplomacy;
- 2) defense cooperation; and
- 3) partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.

On the first priority, the Critical Minerals Framework signed by President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese lays a solid foundation for securing these important supply chains. If confirmed, I would focus our team on fully executing this foundational agreement.

Australia remains a promising market for U.S. companies. Building on the Administration's recent success in securing access for U.S. beef, I would work to ensure a level playing field for all U.S. companies. I would also be a steadfast champion of Australian investment into the United States, partnering with Australia's superannuation funds to execute on plans to invest over a trillion dollars in the U.S. in the next ten years.

If confirmed, I would also continue to strengthen defense cooperation, including working with Congress to further streamline defense trade controls. Amidst China's unprecedented military buildup, the U.S.-Australia alliance is an essential pillar of regional stability and deterrence. As the President has instructed, I would ensure the Mission moves "full steam ahead" on AUKUS and other Alliance priorities.

Finally, if confirmed as Ambassador, I would expand our partnership with Australia across the Indo-Pacific, and especially in the Pacific Islands. Working with Australia to build out critical infrastructure, support private sector investment, and deliver security assistance, we can bolster the resilience of regional partners to the malign influence of our adversaries. The United States is a Pacific nation, and our partnership with Australia maintains our edge in this vast strategic region.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.