



## PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: How much electoral damage do you think the airport decision will do to your Government? Will it threaten your Government's survival?

PM: No, I don't think it will threaten the survival but it is the case that in regard to a few seats around the airport there'll be some strong feelings. I believe that once the message gets out, which is the truth, that there will be a reduction in the number of those affected by noise which will result from a combination of the gradual introduction of quieter aircraft plus the virtual closing of the east-west runway when the parallel north-south runway comes in. When those facts are understood and it's understood that we had the courage to take the decision which was in the interest of the country as a whole then I think it will be accepted. But the easy political decision would've been to go the other way.

JOURNALIST: How many seats do you think you might lose?

PM: I'm not saying that we'll lose any. I'm simply saying that it was a hard political decision to take.

JOURNALIST: You must have advice that particular seats are in very grave danger.

PM: You don't need advice, you know that seats like Barton and St George, Phillip, Kingsford-Smith, Sydney to some extent, you know these are the seats that are an issue where the question of the additional use of Kingsford-Smith airport has been an issue. Now as I say, the easy thing for me to have done would've been to say I'm not going to run any risk. But we've been in Government for six years now and I think we've established a reputation of being prepared to take tough decisions in regard to issues which may initially be electorally unpopular. I mean you don't get to the position of Prime Minister in this country - at least I don't - to take

decisions which I think are against the interests of this country. At the present moment people are saying look at the high interest rates. The easy thing we could say is yes, let's have some low interest rates. But I know that that would be the wrong decision for this country. You've got to take the decisions which you believe are right for the country. In the end I have faith, as I've always had, in the good judgement of the Australian people, that they will understand that we're taking the right decisions.

JOURNALIST: You desperately need those seats and you also don't want high interest rates coming up to an election. So are those two factors going to affect your election timing?

PM: They don't affect the election timing at all. I've said quite consistently that the sort of period that would be involved is the sort of end of this year up until about the middle of next year. I've just said on the program here that I'm not looking at 1989 as an election year. Within that timeframe I said that you could have it at the end of the year. But I'm not thinking of 1989 as an election year.

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