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PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what do you think of the allegations by people like Sandra Nori that you're just a little bit too closely involved with Sir Peter Abeles and that's influenced your decision on the airport?

PM: Just let me suggest you be very careful about that because I've spoken to my solicitors this morning and a writ will be issued against the Sydney Morning Herald. It's completely false, totally defamatory and will be proceeded against.

JOURNALIST: Will you be taking any action against Sandra Nori?

PM: I've told you, I've instructed my solicitors to issue proceedings against the Sydney Morning Herald.

JOURNALIST: What's Gary Punch's future?

PM: I've spoken to Gary and he has as a matter of fact conveyed to me that he thinks that it is appropriate that he should have a change of ministry. I can understand that so I'll just consider that. I think what he says is understandable and I'll consider what change is appropriate.

JOURNALIST: What other portfolio -

PM: I'm not discussing that now. I said I've received from him an indication that he'd like a change. I'm not going to discuss here on the media just what's in my mind about that. I'll deal with it quite quickly and when I've made my decision I'll announce it.

JOURNALIST: What sort of solidarity do you expect from the Cabinet in terms of numbers and gathering numbers for Caucus meetings -

PM: The Cabinet principle is quite simple. Everyone in Cabinet is bound by the decisions.

JOURNALIST: Would Senator Richardson be able to gather numbers on that issue in Caucus?

PM: I don't think he'll be doing that. He'll be supporting the Cabinet decision.

JOURNALIST: Will the backbench revolt have any chance of getting ahead?

PM: It's your phrase 'revolt', I don't accept the accuracy of the phrase. Obviously some people are not happy with the decision, they'll raise it in Caucus. But the Cabinet decision will be upheld.

JOURNALIST: Mr Howard is talking about a July election.

PM: Thank you for raising that. Let's just deal with this fellow Howard. He's been caught, as I say, with his political and fiscal pants around his ankles. He promised at the beginning of 1988 that he would have his tax policies ready by when - August of 1988. They're not out yet, six months later. I've promised right through last year, beginning of this year, I said we will be making an announcement about tax cuts to operate from July 1989. I've been saying from last year. We've gone ahead on the basis that we've got policies in place, we'll deliver what we promised. He hasn't got a policy. He promised the people of Australia he'd have it by August of '88, hasn't got it. In the absence of a policy what's he got to do? As we're delivering on time as promised, he's got to say, 'oh, it's an election'. He's wrong, he's got no policies, he's got no basis of policy to have any answer to the Government's position so he calls early election. I'm very good at numbers, I'm very good at counting, but I'm not that good that I can keep count of the number of lies and mis-statements that Mr Howard keeps pushing out to the Australian people. There will be no July election. All this reveals is the stark contrast of the Australian political scene. A Government which steadfastly through 1988 has promised tax cuts from July 1989, a Government which will be delivering honest promises. Against that an Opposition leader who promised from early '88 the delivery to the Australian public of his tax policies by August of '88 - non delivery. That is delivery by the Government, non delivery by Howard, result - Howard calling. He's wrong.

JOURNALIST: When ^{will} you stop all the guesswork then and come out with a date?

PM: Let me be charitable - you're playing games aren't you saying we'll come out with a date, that I'll announce a date in March of 1989 as to the next election. Don't let's play games. I've been saying all the way along consistently that the period for an election will be roughly from the end of this year to the middle of 1990. I've been saying

that consistently, I'm saying I'm not in an election mode, I don't see that we're preparing for an election in 1989. It's possible at the end of the year, more likely into next year. Now no Prime Minister in those circumstances has ever announced an election date, you know that, it's a good funny question.

JOURNALIST: So definitely no July election?

PM: I have said that, I repeat it. No July election. Mr Howard as usual is wrong and he's wrong not just because he's silly - which he is - but he's wrong for much more fundamental reasons, which I've said. He's been revealed as unable to develop a policy, unable to deliver on his unequivocal promise made at the beginning of 1988 that he'd have his tax policies ready and revealed by August of 1988. We on the other hand consistently have said through last year, tax cuts on the basis of our policies from July '89. That will be delivered.

JOURNALIST: Mr Carr's comments that migrants might have to ... out of Sydney in the future because of the population pressures there and things like the problems of -

PM: The only thing I have to say about that is that in the latest review that we made at the end of last year of our migration policy, we have given additional points under the point system to those who are nominated for areas out of the major cites, and particularly out of Sydney. So those who are being nominated to go to other areas will have a greater chance of getting in under the point system.

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