



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTOP, WOODVILLE, SA, 20 MAY 1989

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JOURNALIST: First of all, from what the protesters are saying out there, the small amount of protesters -

PM: Very small.

JOURNALIST: What are you going to do about Kakadu?

PM: That's a matter that will be decided. As you know we've - it's a conservation zone there - and there are investigations going on in which we're taking into account the interests of the conservationists, the Aboriginal people and the homes of the mining interests and we will make a decision which we believe is appropriate in the circumstances. So the people out there are properly concerned, they have that conservation interest taken into account and it will be and I think we're entitled, on our record in the six years of Government, to be able to claim credit for doing more to preserve the heritage of this country than any other government's ever done before. We will properly take these things into account. I haven't anything more to say about that because it's a matter to be considered by Cabinet.

JOURNALIST: How far away is the decision?

PM: I'm not quite sure how far down the track it is but we won't be rushing the matter.

JOURNALIST: Do you think the next election will be an environment election?

PM: No it won't be just an environment election, but quite clearly environmental issues will be of considerable importance as they have been to us from our first election. You will recall, 1983, which Party was it that promised to save the Franklin, it was my Party. Who saved it? My Party. Who established Kakadu into the World Heritage listing? My Party, my Government. Who was it that saved the Daintree Rainforest? My Government. Who was it that saved the rainforest in Tasmania? My Government. Who was it that put

PM (cont): the areas of Tasmania onto the World Heritage listing? My Government. Hasn't been a record in protection of the environment like the Hawke Labor Government.

JOURNALIST: With the latest advisory committee coming out and saying that interest rates are likely to stay high well into next year, have you totally given up hope that you had earlier in the year that they will come down?

PM: I'm not saying anything predictive about interest rates at this time because it's a delicate issue longterm forecast I was making. I don't intend to say anything now until further on into the year. The fact is, as I have said and Paul Keating has said, that we will keep monetary policy as tight as necessary for as long as is necessary to protect the Australian economy. I mean let me say to your viewers the obvious facts. I'm an intelligent politician, I don't keep interest rates higher than necessary for one day longer than necessary. I'm not a masochist, I don't want to hurt myself. I'm not a sadist and I don't want to hurt the Australian people but I know that with the level of activity that we've got in this country, if we relax on interest rates policy at this time we'd lose the dollar and then interest rates would go through the roof and the economy would collapse. The best interests of the Australian people at this time and into the near future, demand the maintenance of tight monetary policy. Although that might be considered politically dangerous by some commentators, I'll do it because it's necessary in the best interests of this country.

JOURNALIST: Therefore how tied are interest rates in your election strategy?

PM: I haven't got an election strategy. I mean the only person who's talked about elections is the fellow who was Leader of the Liberal Party. I keep making the point that here we are, less than two years away from the last election, I've never mentioned early elections, John Howard did because he was worried about the impact of the cuts in interest rates, cuts in taxes I mean, that we had promised twelve months before and which was brought in and to try and divert attention from that he started talking about an early election. He was also a bit worried about his own scalp, well he couldn't save that and I'm not in an election mode consideration. It's got nothing to do with it.

JOURNALIST: So why the three day trip to Adelaide?

PM: Well I 'spose on that basis, any trip I do immediately after an election is electioneering. I mean, I can't, after an election, go to any electorate - for what period? Until the next election is announced? I mean, I don't mean to be rude to you, but that's stupidity. I am the most travelled Prime Minister I think in the history of this country.

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PM (cont): I like travelling around the electorate, I do it consistently and I do it from soon after elections. I mean don't read any early election by the fact that I'm here with Rod Sawford, who is making Port Adelaide safe for democracy.

JOURNALIST: You mentioned briefly the ructions in the Liberal Party. Do you think Ian McLachlan will be a help or a hindrance in that area?

PM: He'll be a great hindrance to Fred Chaney's ambitions. They tell me Fred's been taking a few headache powders over the last 24 hours, as well he might, because Mr Chaney of course engaged in the chicanery and deception against Mr Howard on the basis that they were going to lose the next election. Mr Peacock, the interim leader, he's going to take over. Now I think that the Liberals will be looking at Mr McLachlan, that is if he beats Mr Porter. I mean Mr Porter has been there for such a long time you'd think he'd have his preselection safe, but if he's not and Mr McLachlan gets in, I think the person in the Federal Parliament who's worried most about that is Fred Chaney.

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