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PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, when will Greg Norman start commencing TV commercials?

PM: I don't know what the time will be, it will fit in with his schedule. I think he would do it as soon as his schedule allowed. All he's concentrating on at the moment, of course, is preparing for the Masters and I've wished him the best of luck in that. So it will be a question of when it can be worked out with the Australian Tourist Commission. But I'm thrilled, as I'm sure all Australians will be, that this outstanding world figure, this Australian, has been prepared to make his services available free, as Paul Hogan did before him. It's a magnificent gesture which is very much appreciated.

JOURNALIST: Who approached who?

PM: Well, John Brown and I had been talking about it and John talked with Greg and I mentioned it to Greg and, John Brown has to get credit for this, in really getting it through and I'm very fortunate of course that I'm a close personal friend of Greg's and he really wants to do it to help his country.

JOURNALIST: Indicative of the sort of bunker the tourism industry's in then?

PM: Not - some bunker. I mean, you know what the growth figures have been. Before we came in less than nine hundred thousand visitors from overseas, now almost two and a half million. An enormous increase in investment, three hundred thousand increase in employment in the industry and already the signs being that the downturn after 1988 and the problems with the airline industry are already being overcome and people are starting to come back because we're already getting the impact of some of the advertising that we've done as part of the special package. But with Greg Norman in the action, it will have an enormous impact I think.

JOURNALIST: Will that be more successful than the Paul Hogan ads, given his international reputation?

PM: Who can tell whether they'll be more successful than Paul Hogan? What you'd have to say is this, that at the beginning of his advertisements he will be a better known international figure than Paul Hogan was when he started doing his ads. But we owe a great debt to Hogan, I mean let's don't forget the great job that Hogan did. I'm certainly grateful for what he did for his country and I think Greg Norman will do an enormous job.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, earlier on it looked like attacks on Mr Elliott would be part of the election campaign, now that seems to have disappeared and today you said he was respected. Why the turnaround on John Elliott?

PM: No turnaround at all. I'm saying that in regard to the Multi Function Polis, a disgraceful episode brought into the election by Mr Peacock, you had the situation where I said a wide range of people who were respected in the business community, I included Mr Elliott in that, he's respected in the business community, no-one argues that he's not respected in the business community, here he was supporting it. Now I have my arguments with Mr Elliott in regard to Liberal Party policies. Let me remind you that in May of last year after the coup, when Andrew Peacock knocked off John Howard, Mr Elliott went out of his way to say that he had discussed with Mr Peacock, in his capacity as Shadow Treasurer, the economic policies of the Liberal Party, that he had been involved in them. So I noticed that Mr Peacock said the other day that he didn't tell Mr Elliott what to put in his jam and he didn't have Mr Elliott telling him what to put in his policies. Well that's not what Mr Elliott said in May - he said he'd discussed those policies with Mr Peacock.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the Coalition is a taking great deal, or taking some comfort, from the latest Morgan Gallop figures. Are they right to do so?

PM: I find it rather amusing that they should take comfort from figures which has us winning. If they take comfort from a poll which has us winning, that's interesting, an interesting comment upon them. The fact is that if you take all the polls - and I want to be very careful in what I say - if you take all the polls, it has Labor winning, but I'm not drawing any solace from that. I've taken the view from the beginning of the campaign that I've got to fight hard, that it's a tight election and I've got to fight right up till tomorrow night. I'd rather have the polls the way they are now, than have them showing a Coalition victory. But I think that I've done what the people want, I've talked about our policies for the future, I've exposed inadequacies of the other side and I've faced up to the questions that need to be asked and answered. I think, as you get to the end of the campaign Peter, it's an amazing paradox. You have the Liberal strategy which started off saying that there are questions to be answered, and if there's one thing

that's characterised this election campaign, it's been the refusal of Mr Peacock to face up to questioning and provide any answers.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you said today that the Liberals couldn't achieve sustained falls in interest rates. Are you conceding that after the election, if they did get in, they could get interest rates down?

PM: No, I can't say what would happen, what the reaction of the banking industry would be, because I know what it is to us. Because they've said so. You don't need me to quote again from the Reuters screen and the various spokesmen for the banking industry which have said that if Labor is returned, interest rates will fall. And they've said it because they know what our policies are and what it's producing. Now what their judgement would be about the Liberals, I can't say. I know that looking any way into the future they would have to be terribly disturbed because the two elements which can sustain a fall in interest rates are lacking in the Liberals' policy. That is, an acceptable wages outcome is not there, there would be a wages explosion and, in terms of fiscal responsibility, the surplus that we've built up - the first government ever to do it - would be dissipated under the Liberals because they've got a six to seven billion dollar unfunded set of bribes. Now, what judgement the banking industry would make about that I simply don't know.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are you annoyed that your relationship with Sir Peter Abeles has been raised in the way that it has in the media this morning?

PM: No. Look, I've had this been thrown at me over a number of years and the facts are simple. I've stood up in the Parliament, when I was in Opposition and since I've been in Government, where people have sought to denigrate me because of my friendship with Sir Peter Abeles. I've stood up and defended the man and defended my friendship. I happen to be a person to whom friendship is important. I don't dispense my friendship lightly. My friendship with Sir Peter Abeles goes back to 1970. He has never, in my period as President of the ACTU or Prime Minister, asked me for a favour. He wouldn't abuse my friendship by so doing. And as I pointed out on the John Laws program, if there's one person who has acted against the interests of Sir Peter Abeles, it's Bob Hawke. Because under the Opposition in government, they created and kept going that cosy two-airline agreement which was a licence to print money for the Ansett organisation. It's Bob Hawke and his Government who's brought that to an end.

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