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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW, SYDNEY WITH MIKE GIBSON,
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GIBSON: Welcome back. In two days time the Federal elections of 1990 will be over and with me, the man who may well be Labor Prime Minister for a record fourth term, Mr Hawke, good evening.

PM: Thanks Mike.

GIBSON: A couple of days to go, how do you feel?

PM: I feel good, Mike. I feel well and I feel relaxed, not cocky or complacent but I believe I've given it my best shot and I hope I've done what the people want me to do, that's two things, to talk about my policies and explain what I think the weaknesses are on the other side.

GIBSON: You're a lot more relaxed than you seemed to be when you kicked off.

PM: Well I was relaxed at the beginning. I think I remember that people tried to run a story about the fact that I complained about a whole lot of microphones on a podium as though that was some real issue. They just misunderstood it completely. I was very relaxed and joking with people about that but apart from that I don't think there's been any real hiccups. I've felt good.

GIBSON: Andrew Peacock was very relaxed earlier on. He's looking ... lately, particularly that outburst with Paul Kelly the other day.

PM: Well it wasn't good. I think we've had a paradox in this campaign. The Liberals started off, the whole concept has been there are questions that must be answered. But the whole campaign has been a contradiction when he ... with me in the debate he couldn't ask me any questions and he spent the whole of the campaign dodging the Press in terms of facing up to the questions they want to ask. I don't think that's wise on their part. I mean if they really say they've got the answers then he should be prepared to face up to questions from the people who are there on behalf of the Australian people to ask those questions.

GIBSON: You've had a few Liberal adversaries now, John Howard and going back to Malcolm Fraser. How does Andrew shape up against those two?

PM: I think you'll agree that in this campaign I haven't got into personalities against Peacock. I've tried as hard as I can to concentrate on the issues.

GIBSON: Would you like to have?

PM: No. I don't like it. I'd rather talk about issues but let me say this. The comparison, of course, ... Fraser and Howard, I've got to say that I think honestly that both Mr Fraser and Mr Howard applied themselves much more vigorously to getting on top of economic matters. Whether you agreed with Malcolm Fraser, which I didn't, or John Howard, which I didn't basically on their concept of the Australian economy of what should be done, at least they did work. They could talk about it and respond to questions put to them in a way which revealed that they knew what they were talking about, even if you didn't agree with their final judgement. Andrew Peacock's been in public life for over a generation. He was Shadow Treasurer when he was there before he knocked Mr Howard off again and he quite clearly hasn't applied himself to understanding the fundamentals about the Australian economy and that's the difference I find between Mr Peacock and his two predecessors.

GIBSON: You became Prime Minister fairly quickly. Has it been all you expected?

PM: Just about. I think the one thing, Mike, that's been a little bit different is I hadn't really appreciated the way in which it's virtually impossible to have a private life - and I don't complain about that. I think that this is the greatest country in the world and to be its leader is just an indescribable honour. It does mean that particularly if you're serious about the job, that you've virtually got no private life, had to realise just how much that was true but that's not a complaint.

GIBSON: Has it changed you at all, the job?

PM: Yes, it's made me a lot wiser. I mean I work very hard. I read an enormous amount of information which I'm privileged to get about our own economy, about our own society and particularly also about world events and our regional events and I'm just very much better informed and a wiser person than I was when I became Prime Minister.

GIBSON: Whatever the outcome Saturday, I guess the one certainty would seem to be that we're going to get a record number of people voting for the alternative parties. What's that say about you guys?

PM: Well I think the major element that it says is about the world. I mean if you wanted to look at the world over the last five to ten years, the most striking feature Mike, has been the rapid increase in interest in the environment. It goes right across age barriers, it goes right across income barriers, right across social barriers and in Australia it's true too of people, more people saying our major interest is the environment and they are going to cast a lot of primary votes for the Democrats or Green candidates because they want to say that's the issue which mainly concerns them. Now my responsibility is to say to them if you're really are concerned about the environment ... your first vote but on the 25th its either going to be Bob Hawke or Andrew Peacock and Bob Hawke's record on the environment leaves Peacock and the National Party for dead. I mean we've saved the Franklin. The Liberals and the National Party opposed. I saved the Daintree Rainforest from logging. They opposed that. I saved the Kakadu from mining. They opposed it. I saved the Tall Forests of Tasmania. They opposed it. So these people that are going to be voting one environment as it were, they must cast their second preference for Labor.

GIBSON: Are these the people who in fact are going to get you in though, I mean these preferences.

PM: Well, I think preferences are going to be important. I mean we're going to get a lot of primary votes, yes, preferences are going to be important, Mike.

GIBSON: How are you going to sleep tomorrow night. I mean I know I'd have a few beers on the eve of a big one. You don't do that anymore.

PM: No, I haven't had a drink for a decade but I sleep well, I mean once my head hits the pillow I go to sleep.

GIBSON: And then once this minor interruption's over you go on with the more serious business of the.....

PM: Well, I must say that during the campaign I haven't been able to think on Saturdays about the horses in the way I normally do. I try and put a couple of hours in on a Friday night but I've certainly been interrupted.

GIBSON: Before we go, on a sporting note - you've had quite a victory today with Greg Norman?

PM: Well Greg, talking about Greg, he's a mate of mine but more importantly than that he's a great Australian. He really is a great Australian, he loves this country and he willingly agreed, proudly agreed, to provide his services free and you know what fee he could command if he wanted to. He's agreed to provide his services to Australia through the Australian Tourist Commission to promote Australia as a tourist destination overseas and you know I just, I love him for it.

GIBSON: These last minute polls, any butterflies for you?

PM: No, this last minute poll shows us winning closely but I do not think about polls even if they, as they all do, basically show us winning. I don't take anything for granted and I'll be working right up until tomorrow night and then rely on the good sense of the Australian people.

GIBSON: Thanks for your time.

PM: It's been a pleasure Mike, thank you.

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