



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
INTERVIEW WITH PETER CAVE 'AM', MONDAY 27 APRIL 1992

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PC: Prime Minister, you described the trip to Kokoda and Lae as one of the most moving experiences in your public life. Why was that?

PM: Because it was the place where the sovereignty of Australia was fought and decided by young conscripts in the main, the AIF was there too, but in the main young conscripts, boys 18, 19, 20 years of age who just died there in one of the most vicious campaigns of the war, and on the 50th anniversary we were there to remember it and to say thank you.

PC: Why did it move you so much personally?

PM: I think it was probably the location, the ground where the commemoration was, was actually fought over, people had actually died there and that and the village, the village hadn't changed very much in the years, the mountains in the back, it was as though you could have been there. I'm sure if I'd have had a son there you would not be composed and stand there, you could not be composed and stand there. I felt as the Prime Minister an obligation to express appreciation on behalf of the nation to those families who left their sons there.

PC: Is it fair to say that this whole trip has really been about nationalism away, for maybe finding our place in history in Papua New Guinea, finding our place in the world in Jakarta?

PM: No, it's about two things. It was about the neighbourhood, making our place more certain in the immediate region, trying to put the Indonesia relationship into its proper context and at the same time accepting the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea's offer to be there for the 50th anniversary of the Papua New Guinea campaigns on Anzac Day. We lost 2000 boys in that campaign and this was the appropriate time, for me anyway, to remember them and say something about it.

PC: In Indonesia did you feel you had to make a point that there were more important things in the relationship than human rights?

PM: Well I thought I got the balance right. That was being able to say and having said that we thought the events in Timor were a tragedy, that the military was too tough, that there had to be a better basis of dealing with the problem. Essentially one of a process of reconciliation, while at the same time saying that the whole relationship is important to Australia. And not only important, that the whole relationship the Government of Indonesia had brought to Australia and brought to the region 25 years of stability. If the Indonesian archipelago were fracturing or breaking up, Australian strategic policy would be completely different and the Timor debate would be set in an entirely different context.

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