



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J KEATING, MP  
ADDRESS AT OPENING OF ALP HEADQUARTERS, CANBERRA,  
FRIDAY, 18 JUNE 1993**

### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

Thank you Bob (Hogg), President Barry (Jones) and other distinguished members of the National Executive, particularly our Secretary Gary (Grey), Andrew (Schroth) representing Civil and Civic, my Deputy Brian Howe, other members of the parliamentary party, Lionel Bowen - its lovely to see you Lionel, - Fred (Daley), the father of the tribe as he is called - I don't know where that leaves Gough (Whitlam), probably the Holy Ghost I suppose, with many people vying for the job of Son. John Bannon and Angela who is with him, thanks for coming over John - during your Presidency this occurred, David Combe who was the first 'Mr Bullder' of the Labor party, the Federal Labor party and it is great to see him here on this occasion and other distinguished guests. I am sure I have left somebody out, but I'm sure they will believe they are distinguished, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a very telling thing to see a modern, strong, contemporary building like this opened under the ownership and name of the Australian Labor Party in 1993; that is Centenary House, a century on the Labor party has remained relevant to Australia and useful to the Australia people. What often happens with political parties over such an extended period, they are no longer useful to their communities, they fall into disrepair, often disrepute, and they fade away. The remarkable thing is that our Party which, of course, has always taken its strength and inspiration from the great body of the Australian people has maintained its strength of purpose and its integrity and its usefulness to the community of Australia and therefore 100 years after its founding we still control the national government of Australia after a decade, many of the States, and until recently most of the States, and here we are building a building to take us on into the next century as this building will.

This must say something about us as a Party, about our capacity to change, our ability to tap the consciousness of the Australian community, to understand

Its aspirations, and to try and do justice to them. The building represents more than an investment or an abode for our federal officers, it represents in a very tangible way the life spirit of the Labor party in that in difficult financial times even and with another federal election behind us and its expense we have been able to build a building like this and perhaps a testimony to the culture we have ushered in in this country to see it built under budget and under time. That is a tribute to Civil and Civic, but of course a greater tribute to the people who work and build buildings, the workers of this country, and in this case of the ACT, who put this building up.

It speaks much about the contemporary Labor party and its relevance to modern Australia and as Barry said a moment ago we are out there again, starting to draw on some of those issues which have for so long lain dormant which indicates we will always be the Party of change in this country and the Party that recognises the true underlying issues of substance and tries to do something about them. I sincerely hope that in this year where so many young people are now joining the party ... one of the great things about the election is that thousands of young people are joining the Labor party. I went to a function for Clyde Holding recently in Melbourne on the occasion of his 31st year in elective public life and a third to forty per cent of the people there would have been under 30. We are seeing them coming to our State branches, people phoning up to join, and for a party to get such an infusion of youth and enthusiasm will, of course, carry us on for another generation.

This is a tremendous change for us. We don't have mass parties in Australia, we like to think we are mass parties, they are not large parties - neither the Labor party nor the Coalition parties - they are not large by world standards, but they are enthusiastic, they are participatory parties and to get such a charge from young people today is tremendous.

So, if you look at the building and the election and subsequently the enthusiasms of the election are embracing these great national issues and the influx of young people I think it has got to say a lot about the Party which fits very nicely with the decision to build this building.

It is funny how foresight always matters, and David Combe had this when he built our first building, which was a struggle. David was always a frustrated developer and became a developer not long thereafter and we got the building up and the building, in our most difficult time in our financial history of recent times, stood us in great stead as we sold some of it down to pay the election costs of the previous election. But it said more than that, it was again at its time a contemporary building, a brave statement of the Labor party - it put a large building which was then, by Canberra's reckoning, a large building. And I always thought it was very nicely juxtaposed against the pastiche the Liberal party put up a couple of blocks away. It was almost lifted straight from the suburbs of Connecticut, this architectural pastiche which fitted the political pastiche of the Liberal party. Here they were all being traditional, this must have been in their 'all the way the LBJ' phase. Or it could have been that Tony

Eggleton looking suitably wise and Menzies felt he had to be surrounded by a building with traditional cultural emblems of more conservative times and values. So they built this building and I have always thought it was a scream. Every time I have come past it I have always thought it was a scream of a building. But it sits over there, and in and out they go in their cars and when ever their crises are on in they walk, with the little Georgian windows and you used to see Tony Eggleton bobbing around through his oval Georgian spoked window.

Isn't this them? And its just the same, whether its last week with Mabo or be it the republic. We have now got Petrou Georgiou, who must be breaking new ground for anyone with a name like that, pushing John Hewson towards standing up to the monarchy last week when he supposedly wrote the signature tune on his last speech. Well, be careful John, be careful. That is all I say. Don't all believe that old advisers are good advisers. But this is them. It doesn't matter what it is in the contemporary environment, you can bet they will always be down the time tunnel there, tripping along behind us.

Anyway, here we are brave as always, modern to a fault, putting up this wonderful building and let me pay - you know I am normally such a critic of packing case architecture and Australian architects and the post-modern school - but, I think Darryl Jackson and Alister Swain have done a marvellous job here. When our architects get it right, they get it right in a big way and we want to thank them for this effort and with the builders they have done something really contemporary and good for us.

I think it says a lot about the spirit of the Party, that we should, in difficult political times and they were, jump in and build a building like this in bad financial times as well. Of course we had the support of the trade unions and the ACTU in the financing of John Curtin House and acquisition of half the property, but can I say, to particularly John Bannon who was the President, under his leadership and, most particularly in an executive sense, to Bob Hogg - a second 'Mr Bulder', has come along and put up a building for us and though Bob has now left the federal secretaryship of the Party he leaves behind another monument to his great contribution to the Australian Labor Party. Barry mentioned it in Victoria, we have mentioned it in the national domain of national politics and a couple of significant national elections, but in organisational terms, Bob will go down as one of the greats of our Party and this building will be here probably when we are all long gone.

Thank you Bob, and John, for your work here today, but I would like to thank David Combes for starting this process of giving the Labor Party assets which it is able to call on in difficult times, for those of you in the National Executive particularly. And I would like to also thank the Auditor-General as the tenant. I thought the last time we attacked him in the House he might have cancelled the lease, but he didn't, he has done the right thing by us and even the super sleuths like Senator Bishop have been over the lease and apparently she thinks

it is all right as well. So there we are, clean as a whistle. There is nothing like getting a seal of approval from the obscurantists of the Opposition.

Can I now say to the Party in general this is a monument to our vitality and our verve. I am very pleased to be associated with it, it is a tribute to be here, it is nice to be asked to officially open it and to unveil the plaque. Thank you.

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