



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP, NT MUSEUM ABORIGINAL ART GALLERY
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- J: This morning's papers, the story on the new evidence about the East Timor massacre, have you got a comment on that? It seems to be more savage than we thought.
- PM: Well this was a very murky period and I don't think any of us profess to know the full details. There were still people missing, unaccounted for. But nor can we rely upon the reports that we have. I am afraid Mr Pilger's credibility is always under a cloud as his views about Cambodia last year revealed very starkly. At any rate, our Ambassador has got a routine visit with the Indonesian Foreign Minister in the next day or so, so we will be putting some questions to the Indonesian Government and no doubt we will get a response.
- J: The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory has described as blackmail your view that should there be a challenge to the Mabo Act, no money will be forthcoming for the setting up of the administration in the Territory. What's your view?
- PM: Well, the Commonwealth has made a very generous offer. I mean, we have these niggly remarks sometimes by other people, but we are paying half the legal costs of managing, half the managerial costs of this claims process, and hearing process, and we are picking up 75 per cent of the compensation costs right back to 1975. Now, you have got to say, well, what else would they require of us? You know, to pick up 100 per cent of everything? I mean, it is after all these Governments who issued the leases, not the Commonwealth. So, it is very generous on our part. At any rate can I say that these issues will be worked out over time and we will be trying to make the whole system work as effectively as we can.
- J: But it is a big ask to ask State Governments to surrender their right to challenge Commonwealth legislation. So the land rights Act here was in the Courts for years from both sides sorting it out to a workable piece of legislation.
- PM: We can't ask anyone to surrender their rights to challenge anything we do in the courts. And we are not asking them. But nor can they suggest that the Commonwealth Parliament hasn't a right to legislate - of course we have.

- J: So, that last line in your letter from last Friday, I think, is not a suggestion to the States that they won't see any money if they're non-cooperative in challenging the Act through the Courts will be seen as being non-cooperative?
- PM: If they are not adopters of the scheme of arrangement in the Bill, they will be a non-cooperating State and Territory and they will carry the costs themselves. Now, that's what we are making clear to them. The Commonwealth Parliament's legislated a State or a Territory has the right to go it alone, but then they will not have the financial support we have just spoken of.
- J: Will there be a consent provision in the social justice package attached to the Native Title issue?
- PM: What do you mean?
- J: Veto. Certainly the Aboriginal groups are pushing for ... missed the veto.. (inaudible)... Native Title legislation.
- PM: Native Title legislation has no veto arrangements, and there are two things which the Aboriginal community sought, but which we were not able to give them. That's the ownership of minerals and a veto right. What we have got is, I think, useful, workable, consultative negotiation processes and an arbitration process in the Native Title Bill. It is a very good piece of legislation. And that's why, frankly, all the States should support it, and that includes the Northern Territory and that includes Western Australia.
- J: But the Northern Land Council and others are hoping for a veto under the social justice package, are you completely ruling that out?
- PM: There will be no vetos. There are not going to be vetos.
- J: Is there any danger that this afternoon's football game, which you have primarily come up for, is a black against white game, not black against black and white?
- PM: No, I don't think so. I think it is a good thing to celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal sports people to this country. And in the great code of Australian rules there has been a tremendous contribution by Aboriginal Australians. Now, nobody says when they get the State of Origin side together to battle it out with NSW... and in some way there is a sort of, what shall we call it, some sort of regional Queensland thing... any more than I think it is appropriate to say that if the All Stars come together as a team drawn from all over Australia to play Australian rules against one of the great sporting clubs of this country, Collingwood, that it is in any way other than what it seems. That is, basically, a celebration of the fact that just like the members of the State of Origin play all over the rugby league code in this country, so too will the All Stars play all over the code of Australian Rules. So, you know, I think that stuff is basically narks.
- J: So, who is going to win?
- PM: I think everyone is going to win, I said this yesterday, I think everyone is going to win. Because it is a good thing to be doing. It will be pretty hard to get a draw

out of all this, so someone will probably win the game. But everyone will win from having had it.

J: Territory Labor has been in the political wilderness longer than the Federal Opposition, what advice would you give your colleagues on?

PM: To keep on doing what they are doing. I think they are about to come out of the wilderness in a big way. I am very confident that we will see the defeat of this tired administration here in the Northern Territory. Tired, without ideas, not up to the great future which I think the Territory has. And I think the team which Brian Ede leads has every opportunity now of becoming the Government of the Northern Territory at the next election.

J: You have probably heard that journalists in the top end are pretty fair game for the polities up here, any thoughts on Territory politics?

PM: On Territory politics?

J: The style.

PM: On the style. I think politics is much the same the country over. But just as after 20 years a Labor Government came to Canberra and renewed and reinvigorated this country, rebased its wealth, I think the opportunity of the Northern Territory now as it is close, one of the great gateways, the nearest gateway to Asia, growing as it is in these great tourism and mining industries and agricultural industries it requires a Government better than it has. And I think the Labor Party can provide that Government.

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