



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
DOORSTOP AT "TIMBAROO", DUARINGA, QUEENSLAND  
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**J: ... (inaudible)...**

**PM: ... (inaudible) ... it's got very expensive, I think, because of the fact that it has gone on for so many seasons. You know, it's got to the point where there is virtually ... the grass has disappeared and you're really into very dry country, and I think ... (inaudible) What it means is that the breeding stock is starting to go, and this is a long term problem for the cattle industry.**

**J: You have talked to some of the hardest hit farmers in Central Queensland in that room there - what are they demanding?**

**PM: Well, they're not demanding anything. I think they are very sensibly saying that this is a major economic and social problem and what we have got to do is think our way through it to make sure that whatever measures we put into place are most effective. Now, the point I made to them is the thing that has motivated this Government is the policies of inclusion, that Australian society goes on together and we don't let one group slip behind. I said at election time we wouldn't let the unemployed slip behind, and I don't want to see the rural community slip behind, so I think this is a chance - in the face of this drought - to sort of renovate some of these policies to see that we do stay together in our society, and that the country is wealthy enough and compassionate enough to make sure that rural people are not denied income support and the sort of support they need to carry on their businesses.**

**J: There are reports that the Federal Government will commit to a \$100 million package...**

PM: Well look, I mean I'm reeking in questions about money I get every day of the week, frankly. Wait and see. What you want here are really, I think, thoughtful appraisals of policies to see whether they work rather than how much money is it going to be. I mean, it will be as generous as we can make it but, most importantly, more effective, as effective as we can make it.

J: Did you expect it to be this dusty?

PM: I did, but I didn't expect it to be so denuded of stock, and also to see some of the regrowth dying off. I mean, I think that's a pretty ominous sign to see some of this regrowth from species of scrub that can virtually exist on anything and they're dying too.

J: Did you hear some sad stories in there today?

PM: Well, now, I don't want to say they're sad stories, but they're meaningful stories. You know, they're stories that are looking for hope and want some sensible appraisal of their circumstances and that's what I'm here for.

J: (inaudible)

PM: Well, again, we've already spent \$100 million in the last..since '92 - on the RAS Scheme for drought. That's the Commonwealth, and of course, we've stated, Queensland receives more. But it's not enough. It's a matter of how much we can do, but then how effectively we can see it come down to where people can use it best.

J: Do you think ...(inaudible)...

PM: Well, if we can get some handle on this in time, I will. Otherwise it will be a little later.

J: And you spoke about a long-term drought strategy - what was that?

PM: Well, that's what I mean. There is a set of ...(inaudible) ... in assistance that looks into income support, carry-on support, where they go after the drought financially - those sorts of things that are in place year-in, year-out. They are there perpetually.

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