



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J.KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, INTER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL, ADELAIDE, 16 MAY 1995**

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PM: As you know, I am in Adelaide to talk about the Budget and the value of the changes it brings to the economy and also to make a couple of important announcements ... for Australia. One is the building of the road, the Mount Barker road, and the other is the extension of Adelaide airport. Now, you know that the Mount Barker road has been a real problem for people travelling in this state, particularly travelling to Victoria. It is a problem, of course, for heavy vehicles, it is a problem for safety and the Commonwealth under its capital programs, that is the National Highway funding program, in the Budget we extended it by \$835 million a year for three years or \$2.5 billion. That is what gives us the capacity to do this and we will build a \$130 million road through the hills with a tunnel about half a kilometre long, a six lane dual carriageway highway back out to, I think is it ... around the periphery of the city there. This will come just as in two weeks time we will be launching the One Nation train. This is in the One Nation project where we built the standard gauge railway across from Melbourne to Adelaide, so there will be a time soon where you will be able to travel from Brisbane to Perth via Melbourne and Adelaide on a single standard gauge. That will be important for the transport corridor of South Australia coming through into Victoria.

So, you will have these two things. A better road corridor between South Australia and Victoria and the rest of the country and for the first time ever an historic change to the rail system where that transport corridor will be improved in rail as well as road.

The other thing that I am announcing today is that, you know that I have had quite long and detailed discussions with Mike Rann about the extension of Adelaide airport and you will recall the motion he sponsored at the Labor Party Conference. The Government is giving expression to that commitment at the Conference today, by announcing that we will begin the site preparation, that is the engineering design work, and the environmental assessments to begin

the extension of Adelaide airport. In other words, we will build the extension of Adelaide airport before the Government sells the airport because we think it is important to get it down and this too will join the road and rail corridor as an important improvement to the transport access to South Australia by air, both domestically and internationally. So, these are very big changes which, in a sense, could only be done by the National Government and, I think, they will be important for South Australia in terms of air carriage, air transport, linkages into Asia and domestically and that important national linkage by road and by rail back to South Australia and to the rest of the country.

Can I say, this comes as part of the Budget and the Budget is good for Australia in many respects, but it is particularly good for South Australia.

J: Mr Keating, you mentioned that you would like to start these projects ... (inaudible) ...

PM: The Mount Barker road, they will start buying land immediately for that. We will probably turn the first sod sometime next year and about two and a half years after that, it should be completed. But, it is going to be a six lane dual carriageway highway and those six lanes will run through a half mile tunnel, through the hills. So, it will be quite a dramatic change.

J: Mr Keating, you said that these are big changes for South Australia. and in fact changes which South Australians have been asking for for many years, why have you decided to announce it at this particular time?

PM: Well, they have come up, the One Nation change comes up from 1992 with the standard gauge. The National Highway program is something that has come up in the development of the extension of that program. We have these national projects be they in Queensland or New South Wales or South Australia set at particular times. In the past we used to provide this money to the States which was then fragmented and, I think, under that road program South Australia used to receive something like \$50 million. Well, you can't do this with \$50 million. It needs a much bigger amount of money, so it needs a national program and it has come up in this cycle now. But, the same with the airport, you know that we discussed this at our national conference. I have had a number of discussions with Mike Rann about it, I have had some discussions with the Premier about it. I had a long discussion today with Mike Rann about both projects and again we think this is the time, given the interest in Asia in South Australia, these potential linkages between South Australia and the rest of the country in Asia, now is the time. So, they have come up and I won't say in a routine way, but they have come up in a way which certainly suits South Australia.

J: ... election promises ... (inaudible) ...

PM: Yes, but only a silly person would say that because they have been in the pipe for months and in the case of the train a couple of years. So, let's not trivialise things. You get this argument sometimes in South Australia 'well, we don't have enough done for us' and when something happens you say 'oh, it is only a gift because of an election'. I mean, look, I spent \$600 million here, Commonwealth money, trying to relieve the State Bank problem on the people of South Australia and now we are doing these major projects that have got nothing to do what so ever with elections which are not in offer anyway.

J: Prime Minister, what have you done for students considering that two months ago you said to me at Glenelg 'go and get a job'. I would like you to justify ... if you are going to cut \$1.2 billion from Working Nation, you have also ...

PM: Do you want a question or give a speech?

J: I want to ask you a question. Mr Keating, you never once addressed the issue of post graduate spending to students on the cap ...

PM: Ok, the complaint was against HECS and undergraduate fees and I made it very clear.

J: ... (inaudible) ...

PM: It was against full fees and I said very clearly at the time, the Labor party would not support fees and we haven't supported fees in the Budget. All the huffing and puffing turned to nothing because in the Budget there were no fees.

J: ... (inaudible) ...

PM: Hang on, excuse me, you have asked a question and I will answer it. The other thing is with HECS we have got the most democratic and useful scheme where we ask students now to subscribe 23 per cent only of the cost of a course. We recover it from them only when they start to earn at average weekly earnings and every dollar, every cent, goes back into university places. The Commonwealth spent \$3 billion on extra university places for Australian students in the last five years, \$1500 million of that has come from the returns from HECS. So, there is about 100,000 students out there now who wouldn't have a university place without HECS. Now, the Government does not support full fees and I have made that clear and the Budget, of course, makes it clear. As far as post graduate fees are concerned, we are keeping an eye on post graduate fees. But again, this is a matter which goes to the autonomous administration of universities and there is now much greater autonomy in university administration than in the past. So, the only party in this country that wants to impose full fees on undergraduates is the Liberal party. At the last election the Liberal

party was running around saying it is full fees and if your parents are strong enough, financially, to be able to cover full fees that's fine. If not, well then, of course, a person with a lot of educational attainments and capacity just wouldn't be in that position.

J: Prime Minister, speaking about the Liberal party, what is your reaction to Senator Alston's claims in the question of Conrad Black?

PM: That is a complete furphy and why are they saying it today? They are saying it today because Mr Connolly has spat the dummy. He is very unhappy about having been dropped for an opportunist, he is now saying that Senator Watson, the other person interested in superannuation, is under threat from Mr Gray, the former Premier Gray and Dr Shephard were both supporters of the Joh for Canberra campaign. John Howard believes they cost him the 1987 election. So there is a great schism at the moment inside the Liberal party about the fact that Mr Filing in Western Australia had been removed, Mr Rocher, now Mr Connolly, Mr Watson is under threat and the day's smoke screen is some conversation I'm supposed to have had with John Fairfax and Sons. The only party that offered Mr Black 50 per cent ownership of the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age is the Liberal party. John Hewson offered it to him about two years ago. I have never discussed any such thing with him.

J: The Opposition has ... (inaudible)

PM: Who cares whether ... (inaudible)

J: Richard Alston has three different sources...

PM: Oh God! they are as silly as a piece of string the three of them. You couldn't trust them out of your sight. Poor old Howard, his nerves are going. The Budget has cracked him. He is in a terrible state, he is following me around radio stations, he must sit in his office dialling them up as I leave them.

J: Have you been defamed by Senator Alston?

PM: I don't think he has defamed me, he just made another unsubstantiated allegation.

J: Prime Minister, there has also been a group of pregnant mums downstairs, stay at home mums who say they have been disadvantaged by the budget.

PM: No, that is not true. We pay the home child care allowance to women at home, but we pay support for child care for expenses incurred. In other words if you have a child or two children in child care we will refund you about, an upper limit of \$60 a week. But, you have got to incur the expense, do you understand. Whereas we pay the home

child care allowance without any expense. We pay that as a right to women at home therefore that this idea that we are paying twice as much to women with children in child care as we pay to women at home is just not true because the payment to the women at home is not in satisfaction of any expense. The other payment is the payment in satisfaction of the expense. So, if you have one child in child care you get \$30 support from the Commonwealth, but you have got to have the expense. But, if you are at home with children, you get the \$30 regardless of the expense.

J: ... inaudible ...

PM: But, it is not just pregnant mothers. It is mothers who have a particularly ideological view of the world and we are the only party supporting through the home child care allowance and the parenting allowance direct payments to women and they are getting those payments, but so too are women who have the expense of child care.

J: Mr Keating, did you make that call complaining about ...

PM: No, I said the answer to that is no.

J: But did you complain?

PM: Look, the inventions that the Liberal party make up are just unbelievable. Go and ask them what Mr Connolly has got to think about Mr Nelson. I made the point yesterday, the Liberal party is like a club, you join at the door, if you want a safe seat they just let you in. And Mr Nelson's great claim to fame, Dr Nelson, was that he was in the Labor party for 17 years and there was that letter in today's press which I thought was quite interesting that came from John Valder who was a former President of the Liberal party saying, '... It is not every day the Liberal party preselection winner has proclaimed, by loud-hailer, no less, that he has never voted Liberal in his life only to turn around and say that was just a convenient lie at the time. Help! One thing I thought Liberal party MPs still had was a bit of personal integrity. David Connolly may not have known when it was his time to go, but this is almost enough to make an old Liberal party president vote Labor'. Signed John Valder. Thank you.

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