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PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH STUDENTS IN ALICE SPRINGS
ON RADIO STATION 8HA - 1 November 1975

P.M.: I gather the local commercial station has made available some period every week for the students of the High School to express these views and to interview visitors like myself. This is a very fine contribution by the radio station itself; it's also a very proper opportunity given to the students. Many people will get the taste for the media; many people who go to High School here will now want to become radio announcers and producers and the radio station has given them the opportunity, and this is the time of life, of course, when you're bursting with ideas and when you respond most quickly to opportunity. I'm sure that the pupils of the High School will take advantage of this opportunity and the wider community will follow their contributions with much interest.

Q: What effect do you feel, what effect do you think this type of program will have on, say, the staff, the students and the community as a whole?

P.M.: Well let me mention the effect on the people interested in the school itself. I think it's coming to be realised more and more that a school concerns not only the staff, not only the pupils, but also the parents and the wider community. School takes up 12 years of every young persons' life; he spends more hours at school than he does at home or in any other activity. Accordingly, it's very important indeed, that the whole community should realise what goes on at school. The school is part of life - people are staying at school much longer and so I think as far as the school is concerned everybody will understand what goes on there and will be able to contribute to what goes on there much better than before.

The other thing is that through radio, people who don't have children at school, people maybe who didn't go to school very long themselves, people who didn't go to school in Australia, will get a much better idea of what the rising generation is interested in doing, what it's succeeding in doing. I'm sure this will be very valuable for everyone, and it's best done through radio. I believe that the community in general is coming to realise that radio is something that people can enjoy in greater variety and in more circumstances than any other medium. If you want to read a newspaper, you have to go out and get it, or you have to have it delivered to you, and if you're in a place like Alice Springs many of the newspapers that you would want to read are delivered, are bought, hours or days after they are available in the place where they are produced. Again, television is extraordinarily expensive. It costs an immense amount to build or to staff or to run a television station; also if you're to pick up television programs you have to have some expensive equipment and you can only operate it in certain circumstances. A radio, on the other hand, can pick up what is being broadcast instantly from any part of the world, and you can pick it up wherever you are, at any time of the day or night, any part of the country - at work or at play, on the beach, out fishing, riding,

whatever it is, you can listen to radio. Radio is with you the whole time; you've got the instant choice; you can pick from programs from all around the world, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, straight away, without expense, without delay.

Q: Getting off the subject of the medium of radio and television, what do you think of the Northern Territory - in particular the people? Do you think they're different from any other, other different Australians?

P.M.: The people of the Territory comprise both the Australians who've been here longest, tens of thousands of years, and also the Australians who've been in this region for the shortest time. The Territory would have people living here for a shorter time than most parts of Australia. Most of the people who live and work in the Territory were not born or educated in the Territory. Accordingly there is immense mobility in the Territory population. Furthermore, there are things which have to be done in the Territory which can be done to the advantage of the whole of Australia and which should be done now. Some of Australia's most valuable resources, particularly mineral resources, are available in the Territory. Hitherto, Australians haven't processed these resources sufficiently themselves. In fact, in respect of most of the mineral wealth of the Northern Territory, it was not known to exist as recently as 15 years ago. So, there was a great lot to be done here, and Territorians are different from other Australians because they've been here, except for the Aborigines, a shorter time than any other people - as regards the Aborigines, longer than any other people. Furthermore, they're in that part of Australia where the resources are most plentiful and least used.

Q: Teenagers in Alice Springs say that there's not much to do, you know, no social life. Do you believe this, in your short visit here?

P.M.: I wouldn't care to express a view. This is something which teenagers express in most parts of the world, including most parts of Australia. But, there are a great number of things which teenagers can do here, more excitingly, than they can do in other parts of Australia. Teenagers very often say that the community isn't looking after them, but the things that are worth doing are usually the things you pioneer and create yourself. And there are an immense number of things that can be pioneered and created in this Territory - a great number of Australians who are holed up in the big cities would find this an exceptionally exciting life.

Q: Do you believe that teenagers are influenced politically by their parents' beliefs?

P.M.: I think they probably are. I think that most people vote the way their parents voted; nevertheless, the younger you are, the more likely you are to make up your own mind.

It's when you're young that you're likely to be most critical. It's when you're young that your ideas are most likely to be changed or to be formed. And so while most teenagers would vote as their parents did, or maybe their teachers, yet they're more likely to made up their own minds than older people are -the older you are, the more set you become in your ways. The teenagers are really, and the people in their twenties, are the people who are most variable and mobile in their political allegiances. That's largely, I suppose, because they see more critically what's wrong with our society, but they also still have the hope that things can be changed.

Q: Do you think the High School should help teenagers to understand politics - by having a particular subject in the curriculum to help with politics?

P.M.: I think they should. I know this is a very controversial subject; a very great number of people say that politics should never be discussed at school. They say that the students will be too much influenced by the views of their teachers. This is mainly a view expressed by conservative people - people who want the world to stay as it is; people who don't want theories, or practices or habits, to be analysed; they don't want things to be examined or criticised or reassessed. Now it is absurd that people going to school shouldn't have a full discussion on things that are going to be immensely important to them, particularly during the ten years after they leave school, when they will be completing their training for life, when they'll very often be marrying and getting into their life style - these are the formative years; they ought to discuss these things at school, quite clearly. And moreover, every high school now has scores of men and women who are able to vote; it's absurd that they can't discuss these things at school.

Q: Thank you very much Mr Whitlam for your time.

P.M.: Well I wish you well in your project.
