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PRIME MINISTER

13 September 1984

TEXT OF BY LEAVE ADDITION TO AN EARLIER ANSWER IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AT ABOUT 6.25 P.M.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during Question Time today I was asked a question concerning Mr. Peter Barron and a visit to The Age. The House will recall that I gave a very specific answer to that question and I want now, Madam Deputy Speaker, to add to that answer by indicating that the editor of The Age, as I understand, will be releasing this statement. He may already have done it. I now read it to the House in addition to the answer I gave and I ask particularly that members of the Opposition here present, particularly the Honourable Member for Boothby, should pay very clear attention to this statement from the editor of The Age. It is in these terms:

"Mr. Peter Barron, Principal Adviser to the Prime Minister, came to see me last Thursday at his request. He did not lobby me about anything. He did not mention a High Court Judge or Ms. Junie Morosi or anything to do with a safe deposit box in a Swiss bank or any other bank. He did not ask me to suppress any story or to publish any story. In fact he did not ask me to do anything and he certainly did not threaten me. I do not know Mr. Steele Hall and to the best of my recollection I have never spoken to him, certainly not about any matter relating to a High Court Judge or Ms. Morosi."

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, you couldn't have a clearer or unequivocal statement from the editor of The Age in respect to a totally unfounded and scurrilous imputation by The Honourable Member for Boothby and I would conclude by addition to my answer, Madam Deputy Speaker by asking the Opposition and I am pleased to see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in his place, that he should take steps to ensure that these totally unfounded insinuations and allegations should be brought to a halt. It is not merely, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it does no credit to the Opposition because that is a matter that is their concern. They have to deal with their stature and how they are going to be judged in the public mind, but what is clearly established now by this unequivocal statement from the editor of The Age is that that scurrilous innuendo involved in the question by The Honourable Member for Boothby is totally without foundation. It does the Honourable Member for Boothby no credit and one must presume that he speaks for the Opposition when he raises these things and therefore it does no credit to the Opposition.

Now, more than that, as I say, the question of the stature of the Opposition is a matter for them, but the stature of this Parliament is a matter for concern to all of us, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it does this Parliament no credit at all that we should have responsible "allegedly" - responsible leading member of the Opposition getting up in this place with these sorts of innuendos. It is in line with the behaviour that we have witnessed in this House this day and out of the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition. Now in no way, Madam Deputy Speaker, could you have a more specific unequivocal repudiation of the gutter tactics of the Opposition through the mouth of the Honourable Member for Boothby.

And I conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, by expressing the hope that the Member for Boothby, and through him the Leader of the Opposition, will have the decency now, having had that scurrilous, baseless innuendo and implication completely destroyed by the statement of the editor of The Age, that he will have the decency - one can express the hope that there may just be a skerrick of decency left there - that they will take this opportunity which I am sure I can provide now - to make a statement in response to what I have had to say.