



PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: ... aboriginal land rights and the fact that the Federal Government will introduce land rights legislation after the State election. What is your response to that?

PM: The Liberals are held in such contempt in Western Australia, as they are in the rest of Australia, because they are engaged in disinformation, fear and misrepresentation and people are increasingly saying - we don't take any notice of them. And this is a typical example and justification for the attitude of the people of Western Australia not trusting the Liberals. On this particular issue I have made it clear, and I simply repeat, that we will be talking with Mr Burke who will be the Premier after the 8th of February. And we won't be doing anything in any way without full discussion and consultation and cooperation with Mr Burke. We will be recognising the rights of Western Australia in this matter.

JOURNALIST: But hasn't he said that he will refuse to cooperate

PM: He has not said he will refuse to talk with us. We will talk with him and I have no doubts at all that there will be a way of going through this which will meet his requirements, that is that the rights of Western Australia will be paramount in this issue. They will be. You can ask 75,000 questions but you will not get anything more than that. We are not engaged in a debate. I have answered the question. And I have said that when Mr Burke is re-elected as Premier we will have full discussions and consultations with him as we will with other states. We have made it quite clear in the Federal Parliament and outside it that on this matter we would much prefer to see that States handle this issue in their ways which will meet the problem and the issue as it exists in each state. And I am sure that Mr Burke will do that.

JOURNALIST: On interest rates. There has been a call from the Pastoralists and Graziers Association for you to scrap the high interest rates policy because of the impact on the rural community. What is your response to that?

PM: Let me say these things. When you talk about economic policy you just can't pick out one element like interest rates. What this Government has done since we have been in office is to set the whole range of the elements that go to make up the whole of macro-economic policy to ensure that there will be growth, solid growth in the economy.

And particularly rapid growth in employment. Now we have been successful in doing that. We have got now in Australia the highest rate of employment growth than it has ever had in its history. We have got a half a million new jobs that I promised back in March of '83. We have got a half a million new jobs five months ahead of schedule. We have got that with containable levels of inflation which we have brought down from the rate that we inherited. Now we have done those things because we have got all the elements of economic policy right. 'You just can't pick out one and say look we will cut that, lift that, and say it is not going to have effect elsewhere. Now if we ^{NEW} not to have protected the exchange rate in the way that ^A did then what we would have had was, in the longer term, even higher interest rates.

I will be talking again with the representatives of the farmers. I am going to talk with the West Australian farmers' representatives tomorrow. I am looking forward to meeting with them. Mr Kerin is going to bringing a detailed submissions to us in Cabinet before long. After further consultation with the representatives of the farmers to see what sort of further things we can do to meet the very real problems that the farmers have got. And those basic problems of course arise from the fact that the international markets have been corrupted by the practices of the Europeans. And now it has been made somewhat worse by the fact that the Americans are reacting against the Europeans.

JOURNALIST: Mr Burke said this morning that interest rates have peaked and that they have to go down after January. What are your views on that Mr Hawke?

PM: I don't want to say anything more about interest rates. I think the facts are there to speak for themselves. I have made clear that we are going to pursue policies, including interest rates, which are going to produce the best results. And as to how interest rates will move, we will see in the near future what will happen. But I am not here to contradict Mr Burke on that.

JOURNALIST: Have you given Mr Burke any assurances as far as interest rates go?

PM: No. I can't give assurances because the Government, other than in regard to housing interest rates, we have made it quite clear we are not going to be lifting that ceiling. May I just ^{SOY} before going on to finish the answer - I am sure the people of Western Australia must be fascinated by the difference between Mr Howard and Mr Hassell. Mr Hassell says he is not in favour of lifting the interest rate ceiling on housing. And of course, Mr Howard is in favour of it. So the people of Western Australia wouldn't know what to think when it comes to the Liberal Party. Our position is quite clear. We are not going to lift that housing rate. And we support what Mr Burke has done to

PM cont: protect people here in this State. They obviously are going to do very, very much better in this whole interest rate area under a combination of Labor Governments than by going towards the Liberals who can't even agree with one another.

JOURNALIST: ... Hartley expulsion ...

PM: No, I am not intending nor do I think I am required to be there. They are handling that quite adequately.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, are you personally concerned that the Burke Government has repudiated federal policy on land rights. And secondly in response to Mr Burke's request to an extension of the gold tax enquiry - are you sympathetic to that?

PM: I have said all that needs to be said in regard to aboriginal land rights in my previous answer. I would simply add this to it though. When you are talking about the things that need to be done to help aboriginal people, there are things that go beyond and have nothing to do with land rights.

And we and Mr Burke will be ensuring that those things that ... has made it quite clear that he intends to do things in the area of housing and health and education.

And those things are important. I have no problems in living with Mr Burke's position on this matter. Now the second question was about gold. The position there is that I understand, that Mr Gudman would be prepared to have an extension of the time of the hearing which could mean an extension of the time for the lodging of submissions. And I know that he has indicated that he would be prepared to do that. And I have confidence that he will make the additional time available which will be necessary to ensure that the West Australian gold industry and the West Australian Government will have the full opportunity to prepare and present their material. And I support them having the time that is necessary to do that. The actual decision as to the period of extension is properly to be made by Mr Gudman who is an independent chairman in this matter.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, given Mr Burke's repeated threats about going to the High Court on the land rights issue.

Do you think you will get to the High Court with him.

PM: That is so hypothetical and irrelevant that I just refuse to go to it. I have said before that this matter will be resolved in a way which will be satisfactory to the people and the Government of Western Australia.

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