



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS, NORTH SYDNEY, 3 APRIL 1987  
E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, how do you feel about the Opposition and the Democrats finally combining and rejecting the Australian Card?

PM: I was saying on the media this morning that there was a great comment by Richard Brindley Sheridan, the playwright, who was also a Whig politician - he used to occasionally criticise his own party. They brought in some legislation once with which he disagreed and he said he had often heard of people hitting their head against a brick wall but this was the first time he thought, in the whole of history, where someone had built a wall expressly for that purpose. On this occasion, it is the Libs and the National Party and the Democrats have not themselves, by a piece of legislation, built a wall that they are going to hit their head against but by the rejection of this legislation they will, in fact, inflict an enormous amount of injury upon themselves because it is increasingly clear that the Australian people approve of the Australia Card. And they approve of it for a very fundamental reason and that is they know that this card is a necessary instrument for attacking tax cheats and welfare frauds. That when it is implemented it will bring to the public revenue over \$800m and the absence of that \$800m, which would come from the tax cheats and the welfare frauds, the absence of that means that there is a greater burden upon the vast majority of honest Australians. The Liberals and the Nationals and the Democrats have said that is their position. They will hear about that from me from every day between now and the next election. And they will be judged harshly by the Australian electorate.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you say when it is implemented. How, now, will you implement it?

PM: After we win the next election.

JOURNALIST: Would you consider re-introducing it with the amendments foreshadowed by Dr Blewett earlier this year?

PM: They have made it clear, I think, what their position is. We will have to consider the position in the Cabinet and I am not foreshadowing that. What is clear is after the next election, at any rate, with the clear and decisive majority that we will get and with the election being, in part, on the Australia Card, the Australian people will give us a mandate, which I think, will be one which no opposition party will be able to avoid.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what principles should the Government be guided by when considering privatisation?

PM: The Government will take the clear view as to whether the use of the public economic capacity is, in terms of all the priorities we have to <sup>take</sup> account of, best utilised in that way. But I am not going into any details about this. These considerations are before the Expenditure Review Committee and I don't think it is appropriate for me, by any sort of speculation, to interfere with the work they have got to do. Once they have had a look at it, their decisions will come up to Cabinet and that is where the matter will be decided.

JOURNALIST: Is this one issue the Opposition and the Government agree on - privatisation?

PM: What a silly question. I have said quite clearly in the Parliament that there will remain a vast gulf between this Government and the Opposition parties. They have a blind ideological fixation about public ownership being intrinsically bad. That is an absurdity. When you talk about the Opposition you have got to understand you are talking at least three Oppositions. They are not united on this. The Liberal Party believe that you should get rid of Telecom. The National Party won't have a bar of that because they still, to some extent, limited extent, represent rural interests. And the great sufferers of the privatisation of Telecom would be the people in non-metropolitan Australia. So there is no unity in the Opposition ranks on this. We take the view that it would be preposterous to privatise Telecom, preposterous to privatise Australia Post. So there is a very, very considerable gulf between us and the Opposition on these matters.

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