



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTOP, BOB HAWKE COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
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E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke what was the message from the pensioners this morning?

PM: Well it seemed to be a particular interest in the area of the threshold for tax and I'm told by my members of the Task Force that that's an issue which has come up in their various meetings around Australia so it's obviously something that we are going to have to look at. Some of their areas of concern are outside our constitutional power as you would appreciate. They were looking for greater concessions in the area of transport. One suggestion, for instance, was made that there ought to be free transport on public transport between the hours of nine and three. Well that's something obviously within the area of State Governments and some of their concerns were local Governments like concessions, further concessions on rates, water rates and that type of thing. So what is useful is that we are now, as a result of this process which will be continued right around Australia, by the end of this process we'll have a very clear view of sorts of issues which are of major concern to the elderly citizens. We will feed those concerns into our decision making process.

JOURNALIST: Are the pensioners likely to get more money in real terms in the next Budget?

PM: I can't lay down now what will happen in the Budget. All I can say is that in our six years of Government we have significantly increased the real value of the pension - some eight percent real increase in pension and that of course is against the significant real reduction under John Howard. So we have shown in the six years in Government that we are about increasing the real value of pensions. And certainly against the pathetic record of the conservatives who prattle and make all the noise and talk about their concern for the family and the elderly, what was the record? They cut the real value of the pensions. We increase it.

JOURNALIST: Are Australian pensioners relatively well off or how would you describe the state that they are in?

PM: Well, no it would be unkind, indecent to say relatively well off. You've got to say relatively to whom? I mean, if you said relatively to the poor of India, they are well off, but that's not a relevant comparison. If you asked relevant to the wealthy in this country, no they are not well off. What we've tried to do is to gradually increase the relationship of the pension to the earnings of the community generally. That's the sort of relationship which they have regarded as important. Now when we came to office the pension as a proportion of average weekly earnings was 22.7 percent. Now we said we would try and get it up to 25. We've done that. It's virtually at 25 percent now, so that's the sort of relative comparison. What's the average community wage, average weekly earnings and what's the pension as a proportion of that. As I say, since we've been in office from the legacy that we inherited from the conservatives, the noise makers but the do nothing merchants, I mean they are marvellous at saying 'this is our concern, we love the elderly, we'll look after them'. Well they walked out of office having reduced the real value of pension, having left it at 22.7 percent of average weekly earnings. We've put it up to 25 percent. That's the relativity that matters and that's our relative performance compared to the conservatives.

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