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## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT TALKBACK RADIO, 8DN (COMMERCIAL) DARWIN, 31 MARCH 1989

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

Col Krohn: Quite a few things in the news this morning in relation to the PM's visit to the Top End. We see where in particular the Olgas road, something which has been an urgency, is to go ahead. More than \$7m in roadworks to help tourism in Central Australia. This was announced yesterday and of course a treaty that's going to be headed up...this is the proposal by the Prime Minister, an eminent persons group to help draw up a proposed Aboriginal Treaty in time for it to be signed later this year so it's all happening in the Top End at this time.. so I'll just check to see if indeed we do have the P M on the line..Mr Hawke good morning.

PM: Good morning Col, can you speak up I can hardly hear you ?

KROHN: OK how's that.

PM: It's a little bit better.

KROHN: Thanks very much for joining us. I know you've got a big programme this morning so just briefly before we take our first call you have made quite an impact of course with your visit to the Northern Territory, particularly in relation to the money that's going to be spent on the upgrading of the road to the Olgas and of course one that's been in need for a long time and the Treaty. You want to set up an eminent persons group to help draw up the proposed Aboriginal Treaty in time for it to be signed later this year. Do you believe that this is the way to go?

PM: On the question of the Treaty I'm not saying it will be completed by the end of this year, what I've said is that I think we are going to see the processes under way this year of fuller consultation going on within the Aboriginal community itself. They want to talk themselves about the sort of things they want to see and I think we'll see during this year, and beyond, the processes of discussion, consultation, explanation within the non-aboriginal community where I see a role for people of stature who, right across the Australian society, will be seen as people who understand these issues and have only a concern for the welfare of Australia talking about it and those processes I see as going on in a way which one it would be nice to believe that that could come to fruition within the life of this parliament but I said this probably will go into the life of the next, the important thing is that these processes, you know, be under way.

KROHN: Mr Prime Minister we won't take too much of your time. We'll take our first call right away and the caller waiting for you goes by the name of Scotty. Scotty you're through to the Prime Minister, go ahead.

SCOTTY: Good morning Mr Hawke.

PM: Good Morning.

SCOTTY: How are you sir ?

PM: I'm very well thank you very much.

SCOTTY: Now Sir, can I ask you a question (Yep) in the last fortnight, in the paper was a statement Pensioners rates are to go up by \$50 (yes) Now is that a fact or is that just a publicity stunt by the Northern Territory news ?

PM: Well I don't know who said Pensioners Rates will go up by \$50 but there's no authority for that statement. What is the case is ... what's your name by the way? (Scotty) Scotty ? (yes) Scotty what the fact is is that there's going to be improvements in the arrangements for elderly citizens and thats...let me just very quickly tell you what I've been doing about that. We commissioned a report which we received at the end of last year and on that..that was from Professor Cass..which was looking at the whole question of retirement incomes policy. We received that report and what I've had done now is having a range of consultations on the basis of that report with organisations representing the elderly citizens and with the Superannuation industry and also I had a back-bench committee of mine going around Australia just listening to the elderly and we're receiving those reports now and as a result of that the Minister, Mr Howe, will be coming to us with a range of proposals for improvements in the area of retirement income policy so people are entitled to understand yes that there will be improvements in the arrangements for our elderly citizens but we can't at this stage Scotty put a figure on it. B ut what I can say is that that will be based upon a record to this point where when we came to office the pension, as a percentage of average weekly earnings was just 22 and a half percent, we've brought that up to 25 percent. In our period of office there's been a real increase in pensions of 8% as against a 4% reduction when Howard was Treasurer so we've got the runs on the board. But we're not satisfied we are going to do more and that will happen this year.

SCOTTY: Thank you very much indeed

PM: Thank you Scotty.

KROHN: Thanks for your call Scotty. We'll take our next call, Kevin you're through to the Prime Minister, go ahead Kevin.

KEVIN: Hello (yes) Mr Prime Minister could I...(Your name is Kevin is it?) That's correct. (Yes Kevin) It can be seen that the Federal Government is spending millions of dollars on the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody inquiry (yes) as I see it it seems to be unfair when reports say that the deaths in custody concern..or more deaths in custody concern non-aboriginal inmates. That being the case is your Government prepared to set up a Royal Commission to look into the issue of white deaths in custody. If not, why not?

PM: With respect that's not really the right way if you look at it as a proportion, you know, of the population it is a much higher incidence amongst aborigines. But I'd just make this point that it may very well be the case and we haven't received the final report as you'd appreciate, it may very well be the case that as a result of the work of the Royal Commission which I might remind you is not simply being done by the Commonwealth but with the co-operation of each of the states, in other words the commitment and the involvement in this investigation into deaths in custody is not simply a commonwealth Labor Government initiative. I pay full tribute to all my colleagues around the States, non Labor as well as Labor persuasion are involved in it but what I'm saying is this, that it may well be as a result of the Investigations that facts and recommendations will come out of that which will be relevant not simply to the question of deaths of Aboriginals in custody but may go, may have implications for the whole prison population or potential prison population and for procedures to be adopted by police and by prisons which will have benefit for the whole population.

KEVIN: this would mean then that the terms of reference would have to be changed?

PM: No it doesn't mean anything of the sort because it means obviously that if Royal Commissioners are examining procedures that are followed by police and by prison officials that that examination of procedures may very well, and is very likely indeed, to have relevance for prisoners other than Aboriginal prisoners.

KEVIN: Right. In fact your answer to my question at this stage is that you're waiting on the report from...

PM: Well we've received interim reports from the Royal Commissioner, Commissioner Muirhead, and as a result of those interim reports there've already been meetings of the Commonwealth and State, Ministers and Officials and there are the beginning of changes in procedures. I'm simply saying that the final series of actions that will be taken,- undertaken and that is essentially by the states because it is in their areas of administration where these things basically happen, that we won't get final answers and won't be able to make the final judgment on outcomes until we get those final reports.

KROHN: Thanks Kevin, thanks for your call. Mr Prime Minister we'll move on right away we do have a full board. Gary, you're through to the Prime Minister.

GARY: Ah, hello Mr Prime Minister (yes Gary) I just want to ask you a couple of questions. Can you please tell me who's going to be looking after airport security when the FAC take over.

PM: Well the whole question of airport security is a matter which has got to be considered by the Federal Cabinet Gary. Currently the major.. well there's a shared responsibility, the major responsibility is undertaken by Federal Police but with involvement by state forces. As a matter of fact the Federal Cabinet is going to be examining this issue to see how we can increase the effectiveness of airport security and it may be that there will be some greater handing over of this responsibility to the states ... have to accept some financial responsibility and involvement but that's a matter which is currently being considered.

GARY: I heard that there's gunna be retrenchments of the AFP throughout Australia..

PM: No it wouldn't be a question of retrenchment, I mean there's no intention to reduce Federal Police numbers. If in fact we come to an arrangement with the states in terms of handing over more responsibility to them it's not going to involve a loss of jobs for AFP.

KROHN: Just on that if I may submit a point. I understand that the cutbacks according to the... some of the figures, could lead to industrial action in relation to this.

PM: With the AFP ? No there is... the AFP have some concerns at the moment but this has got nothing to do with any suggested cutbacks in regard to airport security. There are some concerns in the AFP and in fact the Minister, Senator Tate, who has a direct responsibility in this area will be coming to me next week with suggestions and recommendations dealing with some of the concerns of the AFP but that is a matter which is separate from and will be dealt separately ... and will be dealt with separately from any questions of airport security.

GARY: OK thank you Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much.

KROHN: OK thanks for your call Gary. Apparently there is a meeting right around the nation this morning by Federal Police on this one according to Mr Small who is the Federal Police Association National Assistant Secretary, Mr Hawke, he says that there'd be \$2.2 million over budget by the end of the financial year if costs weren't restrained.

PM: Yeah well, as I say Col, there are some concerns they have in Canberra, we've had some particular problems which have revolved around the diversion of resources that have been necessary in investigating the Winchester murder and so these whole range of concerns will be before me as a result of submissions to me by the Minister in this coming week.

KROHN: OK we'll move along Mr Prime Minister. Isobel is your next caller, you're through to the PM Isobel.

ISOBEL: Hello (Hello Isobel. How are you?) I'm fine. (How old are you?) I'm twelve (Twelve are you?) Turning twelve soon (Good on you) I'm doing a project on Indonesia (yes) and could you tell me if Australia's helping Indonesia in any ways? (If we're helping Indonesia ?) yes.

PM: Well I think the right way of putting it is we're helping Indonesians. We have some aid programmes with Indonesia, not in the defence area so much as in other areas which will be of assistance in helping the development of the Indonesian economy. We're trying to build up relations with Indonesia. They've gone through, I suppose it's fair to say, over recent years we've had rocky periods in our relations but this is a country of, as you know, very very many people and it's the most populous neighbour that we have, immediate neighbour, so it's very important Isobel that we have good and friendly relations with the people of Indonesia. We've had differences with them, particularly as you know going back, as you would have been taught, going back to the last decade over the action they took in regard to the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia and there were some serious difficulties we had at that time. We still are watching with interest, and they appreciate that, the question of the treatment of people in East Timor. But we now have a relationship with the Government which enables us to talk freely about these things but to do so on a basis of trying to get growing co-operation with them so that we can help the people of Indonesia build up their economy so that they can be better off and that we also will be able to have better trading relationships with them as well as relationships in other fields. We've just recently established, Isobel, an Australian-Indonesian Foundation which will have people who will advise us on how we can develop relations with them in a whole range of fields, cultural and sporting fields for instance, so that we can have, you know, a better, more productive relationship.

KROHN: Ok Isobel? Thank you very much (PM:thank you Isobel) OK moving along with another lady, Kathy, you're through to the Prime Minister Kathy, go ahead.

KATHY: Uh Hi, I'm 17 years old right ?

PM: I'm sorry I didn't catch your name (My name's Kathy) Kathy? (yeah) Could you speak up Kathy ?

KATHY: OK I'm just about 17 years old (yeah) and I left school about when I was 15 (When you were ...?) When I was 15 (Yeah) and I'm looking for a job right ? and everyone advertises for 16 to 18 year olds with a year's experience and that's really hard to get, you know, when you're 17 and you've just left school (yeah) and you know that's really stupid (beg your pardon ?) that's really stupid and I was wondering why people do that, same with Social security and things like that, you know.

PM: Why are they saying.. I'm sorry why are they saying you need experience?

KATHY: Yeah you find advertisements in the paper for 16 to 18 year olds and you've got to have six months to a year's experience (yeah well) now how is a 16 to 18 year old supposed to get a year's experience if he's just left school.

PM<: Yeah well let me say two or three things about that... I think it's fairly clear that if you were an employer your preference, if you had all other things being equal, you'd prefer to have someone who did have some experience. I think that's understandable so the second thing I'd say is that what we've been doing over some period of time now in Government is to establish a range of programmes which are calculated to give people like yourself experience either directly under subsidised schemes or in other ways of the work environment so that you won't just be going as it were, cold to employers. Now what I suggest, without going through the range of schemes, we can talk about JOBSTART and the Australian traineeship System for example, but what I suggest you do is that you talk closely with the people in the CES so that they can tell you the range of programmes that are available and you'll find that there is a number of these programmes available, calculated to try to give you experience in one way or another so that you will meet this reasonably understandable approach that employers have. The other thing that I want to say generally is that what we've tried to do since we've been in government the last six years is to get young people to stay in the education system longer because it is the case that the more education and training that you have the better equipped you're going to be to get into the workforce and I just... I don't want to throw a whole lot of statistics at you Kathy (yep) but I just give you an example.

KATHY: But I was just thinking you know (I can't hear you love) I left right, I left school at year 10 and I want to do a course at like College or that, but you've gotta pay a certain amount of money and I live on \$32 a week (yeah well) and that's really hard you know because I gotta pay things like board and buy my own food or like... (yeah well if you go to...) so how you supposed to do a course or something to further your education and live on say \$54...

PM: I tell you if you go to the Department of Social Security and the CES combined you will find the range of allowances that are available to you to help you to do that. I mean just for example when we came in the allowance for Secondary students from, you know, poor incomes was only \$23 a week. We've lifted that to over \$50 a week. There are substantial financial assistance programmes available to help people stay in the education system and I suggest to you that you go and talk with the Department of Social Security representatives as well as talking to the CES so that you know exactly the range of programmes that are available to them, they've been very, very greatly expanded to meet circumstances like the ones you're talking about Kathy.

KROHN: Kathy I'm afraid we're going to have to leave it there we're running out of time. We do have a lot of callers. Thanks very much and our next caller, Greg. You're through to the Prime Minister Greg. Go ahead Greg.

GREG: Morning Bob (what's the name, Greg is it ? ) Yes Greg. There's just a couple of little queries that I'd like to sort of query with you. (Sure) One of them is the amount the Chief Minister gets paid up here (yep) for a start, now whether it's exactly true I'm told that he gets paid more than you. Now wouldn't it be better him getting paid a little less and spending the money in other places instead of spending it on a Chief Minister, you know?

PM: Greg, I don't know what the Chief Minister gets paid. I remember seeing some reference somewhere that seemed to suggest he gets paid more than me, I don't know whether he does but what we've done is to exercise a fair bit of restraint in regard to salaries of Federal Members (right) and Ministers because we took the view that it was pretty hard to be asking ordinary workers to exercise the pay restraint that they had and be giving ourselves big increases so we have lagged behind a bit. But that doesn't worry me, I think that that's something we ought to do if we are going to ask the community generally to exercise restraint.

GREG: The other small query is this Parliament building that they're building up here now, well I was born and bred up here and grown up here and I think that the money could have been better well spent in other areas of the community instead of spending x amount of dollars building a nice big flash parliament building for them to be in and while you've got poor people living on the poverty you know.

PM: Yeah well you know, that's a matter in the end that the people of the Northern Territory are going to have to make a decision about and I don't pretend, Greg, to know the details of what they're spending on it or just how magnificent it is but let me honestly talk about the building of Parliament houses because we... it has been a bipartisan thing in the Australian, the Federal Parliament.

It started under my predecessor, Malcolm Fraser and we've carried on. We've spent a lot of money in building a new Federal Parliament House and I've got to say that meeting people from all around Australia, that have come there and who are talking about it that they are in favour of the building of this new Parliament House in Canberra. They see it as a national building of which they are proud and I suppose it could have been argued in regard to the Federal Parliament that we could have spent less instead of on other things but I think you've got to remember, I guess to some extent this is true about up here although I don't know how grand it is, it's true that the money that's been spent on the Federal House is something that's got to be looked at in terms of lasting over hundreds of years. This new Parliament House is going to last generation after generation after generation of Australians and I think it has to be looked at in that way. Now having said that I can't speak with authority Greg on what's being done up here, I just don't know the details of it.

KROHN: Thank you Greg we'll have to leave it there we're running desperately short of time. Tom you're through to the Prime Minister, away you go Tom.

PM: Yes Tom.

TOM: Yes, ah, good morning I'd like to talk to you Bob (KROHN: Have you got a radio on Tom?) yes we have. (You must turn it off) I'd like to just talk to you briefly about the BTEC Programme and how it's affecting the Buffalo Industry up here. I'm sure you're familiar with the BTEC Programme but for the listeners I'd like to briefly recap.

KROHN: Well we can't do that I'm afraid. I think most of us are aware of the BTEC Programme. Could you put your point to the Prime Minister Tom, we haven't got time.

TOM: Ok then Bob, the Buffalo Industry (Yes I know the industry) OK has had a significant input into the Territory and the Australian economy (yep) in quite a few million dollars worth of export earnings over a number of years (yep). The Buffalo Industry has been caught up in this cattle campaign to eradicate the diseases. The important points now are briefly that the buffalo industry is all but decimated at the present time and is likely to be decimated by 1992. The buffalo are severely disadvantaged by the programme inasmuch as the buffalo have nothing to gain from the programme, the programme was designed to protect the Aust. cattle industry and inasmuch as we are likely to be decimated by the programme I would like, if we could, and I realise this is highly irregular, to ask if we could have a meeting, the Buffalo industry, could have a meeting with yourself and/or John Kerin prior to a very important National BTEC Committee meeting coming up on the twelfth and thirteenth of April?



PM: Well I wouldn't..what I can do Tom is to, when I return to Canberra, indicate that you've spoken to me and see if there's any opportunity of your people... that's the Northern Territory Buffalo Industry Council isn't it? (That's right) I'm aware of your business and your concerns. I'll mention to John Kerin that you've spoken to me and see if there's any chance of you talking with him before then...we are contributing very large amounts to the programme. We're contributing 20% of the \$167 m budget for the BTEC nationwide, that's over the four years from 1988 to 1992 and that ... \$56m of that is budgetted to the Northern Territory and, as you know the main incentive is to continue the campaign, is to protect the export market access for Australian beef. Now I understand what you are saying in respect to the buffalo industry and I repeat I won't have the opportunity of meeting with your council myself but I will convey your concern to John Kerin and ask that he speak with you.

TOM: I believe Bob that John Kerin is due in the Territory in a short while (What within the next few days is he?) No sorry, within the next, I think, four weeks.

PM: Yeah well I'll speak to John and ask that he hear what you've got to say. (OK, very good)

KROHN: Just before you go Mr Prime Minister I know that you're... you have to hurry away. Can I get your impression of your vision for the Northern Territory for the future.

PM: Yeah, well you ask, Col, my vision for the Northern Territory. I want to say this. Your listeners just don't have to depend upon a politician now uttering a few fine words. I just ask them to look at the record since we've been in. And in six years we've taken the view that the Northern Territory is a very important part of Australia in not only terms of its own population but its importance for these reasons. 1. It has a very great strategic significance and we are daily giving evidence to the people of the Northern Territory of our commitment to ensuring that in the effective defence of Australia that the Northern Territory is going to be playing an important role, hence the expenditure of such enormous amounts of money including for example the \$230 odd million in the first stage of Tindal which is going to be added to significantly in the second stage. We are spending money up here in a way which is not only protecting the defence and strategic interests of Australia but is boosting the Northern Territory economy. Secondly we recognise the importance for the future of the Territory and of Australia of tourism and so we are both protecting the environment of the Territory in a way which will mean increasingly tens of thousands of other Australians and overseas visitors will be coming here to see the natural wonders of the Territory and in so doing, boost your economy, and providing facilities, additional facilities as I've just announced, the road funding for the Olgas...

We see the Territory as a very important part of the total Australian economy and we will continue to make sure that in the relevant areas where we can directly be of assistance we will. We understand, and I think you people understand in the Territory, that we can't just be giving, handing out money in general terms in excessive ways by way of grants to the Territories but in the process of adjusting the financial relationship I think even our political opponents in the Government up here will acknowledge that at the last Premiers Conference we agreed to make special arrangements to help the phasing in of the new situation. Currently those discussions are still going on in the lead-up to the next Premiers conference and Loan Council meeting and I can assure the listeners, your listeners and the people of the Northern Territory, that we'll continue to take into account the special features of life in the Northern Territory and do what we have done in particular areas to ensure that the strengths that you have here are going to be added to and the particular interests and concerns that you have are protected.

KROHN: Mr Hawke, just one more brief question. With the departure of Mr Punch in NSW from your ministry you said that you have a lot of talent to choose from (yes). Does that talent include a likely Minister from the Northern Territory, Senator Bob Collins or Mr Warren Snowdon ?

PM: They are two blokes, in my judgment, of outstanding talent. Neither of them would expect that they would be filling the vacancy on this occasion, but in regard to each of them, by the record they've established, not merely in advancing vigorously the interests of the Northern Territory, but in the general contribution they make in the Parliament and in the Party, they each have legitimate expectations in the future of reaching ministerial ranks. Either of them would be a valuable addition to the Ministry.

KROHN: Mr Prime Minister thank you very much for your time.

PM: Thank you very much indeed Col to you and to your listeners.

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