



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, TWEEDSMUIR RESTAURANT,  
BRISBANE - 28 APRIL 1989

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

**JOURNALIST:** Your response last night to the disturbance which greeted Mr Howard.

**PM:** I don't like demonstrations which reach the point where there's some danger to people against whom the demonstration is directed. I don't draw any pleasure or comfort from any situation if there's been any hurt to Mr Howard or anyone associated with him. I disagree with him very much on most issues but I wish him no physical danger at all.

**JOURNALIST:** Is it an indication of how volatile this immigration debate could become?

**PM:** It is an area which does arouse passion and it's one of the great regrets that I have that what had been for such a long time an area in which there was just no question, but there was total bipartisanship, that that was fractured to some extent. I hope that will come to an end but whatever the background I simply don't want to see a situation where my political opponents or anyone in politics for that matter are subject to processes involving danger. We have to draw the line in this country between the right to demonstrate and to protest and the unacceptable practise of inflicting damage or hurt to others.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Prime Minister, is the British takeover bid for food giant Goodman Fielder in Australia's interests?

**PM:** This is something which will obviously have to be examined by the Treasurer and by those advising him. I will clearly be consulted about this and want to get some indication of what the views are as to the implications of such a bid if it was successful. But I don't prejudge that examination.

**JOURNALIST:** John Moore finally released his privatisation policy. Do you personally believe the airlines should be privatised?

PM: I am not expressing my personal view about these processes because what is going on at the moment is that we have within the Labor Party committees examining this issue. I'll have directly and indirectly some inputs to those processes but I'll conduct that within the processes of the Party rather than publicly.

JOURNALIST: This trip you have been emphasising education issues, does this indicate the Hawke Government is going to concentrate even more to improve education in Australia?

PM: No, what it indicates is this. Firstly that we are very proud of our achievements in this area, as we are entitled to be. When you think of the basic fact of what we have done to lift the participation rate from that miserably low 36 per cent that we inherited up to 58 per cent, the enormous increase in the number of places in the tertiary system, the great increases in funding for training programs in Australia, the uplift of the apprenticeship system and the traineeship system, we have got an enormous story to tell which has lifted Australia from a position where we were low in world rankings to one where we are going up and up as we should be so that we create a society where all young people irrespective of the income level of their parents are going to have the opportunity of fully training their talents. Now it is a matter of pride for me that we can tell that story and we will continue in the years ahead to do those things. For instance, if you are talking about the future we have already made the decisions in the tertiary education area which will create in the next three to four years an additional 40,000 places or the equivalent of another Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney university. So those major decisions for the future are already in place.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, you had a go at President Reagan about the wheat problem, you've now talked to Vice-President Quayle, what can we possibly do to get them to back off and give our wheat farmers a decent go?

PM: Well we won't declare war. What you've got is only the processes of hard persuasion, the pressing of facts. I have put the facts before Vice-President Quayle, at this stage he doesn't seem to want to understand the facts, we will continue to put those to our friends in the United States Administration. If you look at wheat for instance the facts simply are that in those of our overseas markets which haven't been targetted by the Export Enhancement Program we have maintained our sales. In the seven countries where the EEP has been operating, where they have targetted, then we've suffered significant losses, and particularly that's true in regard to the Soviet Union and China. The facts are simply indisputable and we will keep pressing them upon our friends in the United States to get them to see reason.

**JOURNALIST:** Are you disappointed that Mr Quayle should come out with the statements that he did so soon after negotiations with you on such a sensitive issue?

**PM:** Well you could hardly call them negotiations. I wasn't in a negotiating position with him, I was in a position where I was telling him Australia's view and what the facts are. But we'll have to continue to press our case, as we will, at all levels of the Administration and that will be done by myself and by my Ministers. This is something in which we have the support of the National Farmers Federation as well.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Howard said today that instead of ratifying the Antarctica Treaty maybe we should look at a total, at not ratifying it, a total ban on mining in Antarctica to keep it in pristine condition?

**PM:** Well its very interesting to hear Mr Howard saying anything about the environment which is relevant because the record of the conservatives in this country on environmental matters is appalling. We will have this issue coming before the Cabinet, there will be submissions before us which will canvass the pros and the cons of the proposed convention. The argument of those who are supporting it is that in the absence of some convention you wouldn't have any regime at all which would inhibit anyone going in there and just having an open slather. Now I'll be looking at this very very closely with my colleagues to ensure the decision that we take is one which is most likely to protect that environment.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Howard also indicated yesterday that if he became a government the Liberals would try to encourage domestic saving. Now could that be an attractive proposition in an election mode?

**PM:** Well I find it difficult to believe that anything that Mr Howard or the Liberals would do would be found to be terribly attractive by the electorate at the moment because they are going through a period where they are demonstrating graphically to the Australian electorate that they can't manage their own affairs. Internally they can't govern themselves so they won't be acceptable as a government of Australia. On the question of the substantial question of savings under this hypothetical Liberal government, I don't know what people would have to save because I asked people to remember that in every wage case of the last 20 Mr Howard has opposed any wage increase and his recent propositions are that he would support wage increases based on productivity, to have a trend productivity of about one and a half per cent. It means virtually no increase in wages. So not only is the question of a Howard government entirely hypothetical but so is the question of people having anything to save upon which any interest could be taxed or untaxed. But let Mr Howard go on with his own business of trying to get his Party

in order, we'll go about the business of running the economy of the country efficiently and directing our concerns to trying to ensure that as far as possible we reduce the demand upon overseas savings. My Government has brought about a reduction in the deficit and the creation of a surplus that means that there is no public sector borrowing requirement, we make no demands as a Government upon the savings of others. I don't think he has really got anything useful to say on the economic debate at all.

JOURNALIST: He has also indicated, Prime Minister, that he would like to fight the next election on the question of the level of Australia's overseas debt. How would he feel about that?

PM: Look its just silly, I mean it really is a silly question and a silly observation about Mr Howard wanting to fight an election on any issue. He can't get his own house into order, its very doubtful whether he will be leading them when we get to the next election. So why should I be taking any notice of this transient leader talking about what he would like to fight an election on.

JOURNALIST: ... in the Power cup tomorrow?

PM: I don't know, I haven't seen the field.

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