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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, SOUTH MELBOURNE
5 MAY 1989**

E & O E - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Are you saddened by the news of the killing of the Kanak leader?

PM: I'm very saddened by it. Of course I've met the late Mr Tjibaou and I express to his family and the family of the other assassinated leader my personal sorrow and that of the Government and the people of Australia. It's particularly unfortunate coming as it does at a time when in a sense they were celebrating the achievement of the Matignon Agreement which laid the foundations for the bringing of a peaceful resolution of the dispute in New Caledonia. I trust that the assassination of Mr Tjibaou will not lead to further violence and we certainly express that hope and the commitment of the Australian Government to support the processes that have been initiated under the Rochard Government to bring about a peaceful resolution of what had promised to be a devastatingly disastrous situation with the prospect of considerable bloodshed. The Matignon Accord pointed the way to a peaceful resolution of the troubles in New Caledonia and I trust that this tragedy will not divert all parties from proceeding along those paths.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, it's been reported this morning that a group of 30 Federal MPs are drafting a piece of legislation to prevent Medicare claims for abortion. Are you aware of that?

PM: No, I haven't been aware of that. I noticed in the brief opportunity I've had to read the Press this morning, I noticed some reference to it. There's no recommendations or approach out of that group that I'm aware the Government. I don't regard it as particularly rewarding therefore, there's nothing before us and just to comment on some Press speculation about what someone may do in the future doesn't seem to me to be very rewarding.

JOURNALIST: But what is your feeling on that?

PM: I don't have feelings about Press reports. If I had feelings about Press reports I'd be in an asylum myself. For the moment I don't intend to get into an asylum on the basis of having feelings about every Press report I see.

JOURNALIST: I take it it would be a conscious vote issue though if it ever got to legislation?

PM: The position of my Party has been that way in the past, I don't see any reason why that would change. I mean it's just so speculative I don't see any reward to anyone in commenting at this stage on it.

JOURNALIST: You're off to Tasmania tomorrow.

PM: No, I'm off tonight.

JOURNALIST: What's the future of Wesley Vale now?

PM: There is no future for the particular project that was put up because this Government which has probably the strongest environmental credentials of just about any government in the world, and certainly the strongest of any in this country's history, is not going to permit an operation which allows the pumping into the ocean each day of 13 tonnes of these chlorides. So there's no future for that project in that form. It was environmentally untenable and unacceptable. I'll go down there, as I say, late tonight so I'll be having some things to say tomorrow. I really think we ought to leave it till tomorrow.

JOURNALIST: How realistic is the idea of a coalition between the ALP and the so called Greens in Tasmania?

PM: We will be running in this campaign to win in our own right as no doubt will be our major opponents, the Liberal Party. I believe that Mr Field's Party have a good chance of winning. Having said that if it were to emerge that there was a hung Parliament with the Greens holding the balance of power, well that's something that would have to be looked at then. It was quite clear that obviously in terms of the outstanding record of Labor on environmental issues as compared with the environmental vandalism of the Liberals in general, and Mr Gray in particular, there should be no doubt as to which way that coalition would work out.

JOURNALIST: What did you think about the Liberal Party reopening Senate preselection?

PM: Haven't we seen a saga of comedies or stupidities in this area? I mean, the leader of the Liberal Party federally, Mr Howard, distancing himself, then drawing out of a hat who was going to represent him at the preselection panel which must be one of the most pathetic abdications of leadership that I've ever seen. Now the third chapter in this comedy of errors is that having opened up the can of worms and seeing that Mr Macphee might be dumped - which is what they want to do because they reject him - hard right of the Liberal Party led by Mr Howard will not accept any small

PM (cont): 'I' Liberal philosophy as represented by Mr Macphee. Having committed themselves to getting rid of him, there is now a backlash in certain areas so they say 'oh, now what do we do? We've plotted to get rid of him, we're going to dump him out of the House of Representatives, bit of a backlash, so we'll change our previous decision and reopen nominations for the Senate and we can say to Ian "Ian, having kicked you thunderously in the backside, having told the people of Australia - particularly the people of Goldstein that you're not a worthy representative - to try and cover our own backsides having kicked yours, we'll now reopen nominations for the Senate". I mean, what a comedy of errors. I mean, what a mob of incompetents. They make such a massive mess of conducting their own affairs and they seriously say to the people of Australia 'look how we muck up our own affairs, please let us manage yours'. What a joke.

JOURNALIST: With those problems do you have any temptation to call an early election?

PM: No, no, no. I'm a man beyond temptation these days.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, are you concerned that while you're down here today talking about the advantages of the LaTrobe Valley region there's a lot of concern down there about the building of an outfall sewage unit into the ocean and people down there are saying it threatens to become another Wesley Vale because of the lack of adequate environmental controls?

PM: I'm not acquainted with the details of that issue. They haven't been brought to my attention, perhaps they will and if I become acquainted with the details I may be in a position to say something about it. But I don't make a habit of talking about things that I don't know anything about. It's a very good rule for politicians and people in the media and all other areas of public affairs.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher celebrated her tenth anniversary yesterday.

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Anything in line like that for you perhaps?

PM: Well, we've had ~~six~~, we've had six. Well, we've got another election coming up, you know, sometime in the next twelve months, within the next twelve months, that could make seven, seven from ten is three. Oh yes, it could happen.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke Channel Ten sport would like to know your football tips for tomorrow. St Kilda or the Swans?

PM: And you, of course, are speaking to Melbourne's leading tipster, leading by a very considerable margin in the Melbourne Herald tipster's poll.

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