



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, ABC RADIO STUDIOS, PERTH - 8 FEBRUARY 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: What's your response to the employment figures today, 6.2% for January?

PM: Oh, I'm reasonably satisfied with the outcome. I think it's broadly in line with what we expected and still further rise in employment, but the increase in the participation rate has meant a slight increase in the unemployment rate. And in total it brings the creation of jobs under this Government to over 1.6 million, an average annual rate of growth of about 3 1/2%. An important thing to remember for people as they are coming up towards an election at some stage in the first part of this year, if they want to think about employment, just understand this basic fact, that those figures show that under my Government in 7 years we've created jobs in this country five times faster than the conservatives did in their 7 years, that's the important point.

JOURNALIST: Would you support a Royal Commission into WA Inc.?

PM: That's not my decision. That's a matter for the State Government and I don't intervene in the affairs of States.

JOURNALIST: Would you welcome this.

PM: I would say that's a quite hypothetical matter. It's for the State Government to decide these things.

JOURNALIST: Are you going to be meeting with Mr Dowding at all today?

PM: Well, I haven't got any plans to meet with Peter. I don't know whether he wanted to see me but I've got a full program of federal campaigning.

JOURNALIST: Will you be seeing Carmen Lawrence before you go?

PM: Not that I know of.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, in Melbourne today there's supposed to be details being worked out for the compensation to be paid to the airlines by the pilots. Will you still be pushing the airlines to waive that compensation payment?

PM: Yes, my position is quite clear and unchanged from what I said before. They needed to take the action they did because of the position of the pilots and the total misrepresentation of the pilots about what was in issue. But I don't believe in them collecting damages against the pilots. I said that before, I believe it still.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, the Pacific Highway inquiry - the Coroner has said some fairly nasty things about the Highway itself. Is that going to become a political issue on the East Coast, the upgrading of that Highway?

PM: Well, I suppose its a political issue already to some extent. I think that the State and the Federal Governments together need to look at these issues. We have already, as you know, brought in a package of \$110 million which we will offer to the States and that's to look at what we call the black spots where there has been a concentration of accidents. And the availability of that very substantial amount of money is dependent upon the States picking up proposals which would give national standards of road safety and I hope that the States will, in the light of all the evidence that's becoming available, respond to that so that this very substantial increase in funding from us can take place. Whether more needs to be done in particular areas is a matter that we ought to have serious and I think non-partisan discussion about with the relevant State Governments.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister what's your reaction to the High Court decision on the companies legislation?

PM: Well, Peter, I haven't had the opportunity of being briefed on that. I'm told that there's a 6-1 decision I think against the Commonwealth on that and I've asked for briefing to be supplied to me. But until I get that I can't really make a useful comment.

JOURNALIST: Thanks very much.

PM: Good on you.

Ends