



## PRIME MINISTER

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PM: Today we are witnessing yet another piece of dramatic evidence of the commitment of the Liberal and National Party coalition to ensuring that those who are already most privileged in this society should have that privilege further entrenched. The policies that they've announced in regard to child rebates and child care rebates mean very simply that there is no targeting in terms of need. Those who are already best off in the community will do best out of their proposals. This is consistent with their whole approach to government. You've seen it in regard to capital gains tax, that they'll put billions of dollars into the pockets of less than one per cent of the richest in the community. The whole approach in regard to capital gains tax, education, superannuation and now in regard to children. It is an obscenity that scarce resources should be wasted upon the highest income people in the community without any targeting to those in need and that those of us in the community who are already the best off should do best under their proposed policies. Further it is quite clear that the policies announced will create no new places and, further, that it will be open to rorting. It is a situation which will lead to a nightmare of administration and has already properly been condemned by those in the community who are most knowledgeable in this area.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, one of the key themes of the Opposition leader today is 'a vote for Labor is a vote for more of the same, that there'll be no change, that the status quo will remain'. Isn't this one of the toughest arguments that they've got to throw at you?

PM: If that's the best argument then you're going to see me walking around for the next three weeks with a large smile on my face. The answer is in two parts. It is one of the few statements made by Mr Peacock which has some accuracy in it. It is accurate that you will have more of the same in that under my Government there has been the creation of 1.6 million new jobs. And I remind Mr Peacock that that's a rate of job creation five times faster than in the seven years of their government. And it is true that there will be more of the same, that we will continue to create jobs significantly faster than

could possibly happen under their policy. So he's right. He's also right that there'll be more of the same in that Medicare will be maintained so that in this country every person will be covered, so that there will be universality and fairness in regard to Medicare. He is right in that respect, that we will maintain and save Medicare against the proposed demolition of it by them. He's also right in saying that there'll be more of the same in regard to education. I remind Mr Peacock that under their seven years they did nothing to lift the rate at which kids stay in school. I've doubled it. There's two out of three of the kids staying on because we have applied funds to those in the community, the lower and the lower to middle income areas, so that their kids can stay on in the education system. He's right in that respect. He's also right that there'll be more of the same in regard to the taxation system. That is when they walked out of office the top tax rate was 60 cents in the dollar and the bottom rate 30 cents in the dollar. Under my Government it's been reduced to 47 and 21. How has that happened? It's happened because I brought to an end the disgrace which was the taxation system under Peacock and Howard and Fraser. A system which was described by their own Royal Commissioner as being a country where the fastest growing industry was the tax avoidance industry. A country with a tax system which was described by Professor Russell Matthews as a country in which it had become increasingly a matter of choice as to whether the rich paid their tax. So he is right. There'll be more of the same. The closing of the tax rorts which they allowed to flourish. There will not be the situation which he promises, that is of a reversion to the past where billions of dollars were passed to the wealthy out of the pockets of those who need it by way of increased expenditure for education and health which we have used, the money that we get from the capital gains tax, is used for the benefit of a great mass of Australian people. So you can see, yes he is right in very many respects that there will be a continuation of the same, that is to economic growth, employment growth and a fair system in which government is used in the interests of all Australians rather than to prop up the privilege of the few. A second thing to say about his statement is that we have created, and are creating in cooperation with the Australian people, the basis for a prosperous future for Australia. We inherited an Australia which was inward-looking, where manufacturing industry was diminishing, where employment was declining in manufacturing. I inherited an Australia in which after seven years of conservatism the steel industry of Australia was going to be closed down. Now, under my Government we've created a situation where not only have we saved the steel industry but it is now growing in terms of its exports all around the world. We now have created the basis for the future where exports are going to grow, where we will have a more competitive Australian economy. We've also created a situation where we'll be tackling, for the future, the debt problem by extending superannuation right through

the population. That will be relevant to the needs of individuals. It will be relevant to the savings and debt situation of Australia. At the end of their period we had an Australia which was uncompetitive. Now we have these things. The highest investment surge in Australian history - the highest investment surge in Australia's history, more people in work and more people being better trained. These are the building blocks for a future competitive Australian industry and Australian economy in which there'll be more jobs, more secure jobs and better trained Australians.

JOURNALIST: On the environment Mr Hawke, Senator Richardson has estimated that about 20% of voters could leave the major parties for the green candidates. Given your speech yesterday, what's your estimate?

PM: I don't pretend to know the figures. All I can say is I've read the various analyses and polls that have been done and they do seem to have a common feature, that the green candidates, independent candidates will probably have a higher vote than they've had before. My point yesterday is simply this, that for those in the community whose first concern is the environment, they simply then have to ask themselves the only important question - "If my concern, my primary concern is the environment, which of the two parties which will form government - that is Labor or the coalition - which has the best record on the environment?" The answer to that question is simple. As I've said before, I repeat it again, the Franklin in this state of Tasmania runs free because of Hawke and Labor. The Liberals would have dammed the Franklin. The Daintree Rainforests are not logged because of Hawke and Labor. They would be logged, would've been logged and continued to be logged under the Liberals and the Nationals. Kakadu is not mined because of Hawke and Labor. It would be mined under Liberals and the National Party. The tall forests of Tasmania have been saved because of Hawke and Labor. They would be felled under the Liberals and National Party. So that is the question. Whatever the number of people is that is going to vote 1 on environment, they must give their second and determinative preference vote to Labor.

JOURNALIST: Further on the environment, will the Labor Party's three uranium mines policy be maintained throughout your fourth term?

PM: I would believe so. We've got a position of course where ... the Party is looking at the whole question. But from what I can gather, the economic situation is that there wouldn't, it wouldn't make sense to go beyond that. It is proper that I should say we've got to get the report of the committee, but that's the inclination I have, yes.

JOURNALIST: What's the future for Medicare under your Government? What's going to happen to the levy?

PM: The Medicare levy will not be increased in the life of the next government. It's been made clear by Dr Blewett. As you'll appreciate, the forward estimates cover the projected ongoing costs of Medicare. The position for the voters of Australia in regard to their health care is crystal clear. You have a government which has instituted a system which is both universal - every Australian is covered - and it is fair because people like the Prime Minister on high salaries and Peter Harvey on a reasonably good salary Peter, we pay more, as we should, so that all Australians are covered. Against that you don't have to rely on my own words. Let me quote the immortal words indelibly imprinted on the mind of every concerned Australian of the shadow minister for health, Mr Shack, and he said the Liberals and the National Parties do not have a particularly good track record on health and I do not need, he said, to remind you of our record in government. One thing in this campaign, in the pre-campaign period which the Liberals have got absolutely right. Their record is appalling.

JOURNALIST: Mr Peacock's talked about relaxing Loans Council limits on the States for infrastructure projects. Would you support relaxation of the Loans Council limit?

PM: If we had a proposal before us which could be regarded as relevant and targeted for a particular issue we'd be prepared to look at it. But Mr Peacock's problem goes far beyond that. I understand that he is making available the princely sum of \$3 million for cleaning up beaches and rivers. That's for the whole of Australia - \$3 million. I'm told this morning that the estimate here in Tasmania by the authorities is that for cleaning up the Derwent alone, the River Derwent would cost \$52 million. \$3 million is pretty irrelevant isn't it.

JOURNALIST: Given that the environment is a big issue and you do have these concerns about independent or green candidates, is there anything more that you're able to announce in that area?

PM: We'll be making an environmental statement later. There'll be references in the policy speech and perhaps some other comments. But I'll just make two points. One, that is that there'll be more things to be said and I will be saying them before the campaign is over. Secondly, the choice couldn't be starker and clearer. The point is that you've got to test parties on issues for the future on the basis of what they've done in the past. I remind you and all the people of Australia that on every fundamental decision that we've taken to protect the environmental future of Australia, we have been totally opposed by the Liberals and National Party. The second thing of course is to say this. That even if some sections of the Liberal Party, and I concede that there'd be some elements of a very divided Liberal Party, there'd be some elements of the Liberal Party which would have a

reasonably enlightened view in regard to matters environmental. But the realities are of Australian political life that on all issues, and particularly environmental issues, the National Party tail wags the coalition dog. People who are concerned with the environment have got to realise what it would be the National Party who would be laying down the law for the coalition on these issues.

JOURNALIST: Your Government paid out \$26 million in a grant to buy the Abel Tasman passenger ferry in 1984. Are you prepared to commit your Government to a future financial involvement of cross-sharing in ...?

PM: I've indicated that when we're returned after the 24th that we are prepared to discuss these matters with the Tasmanian government. I have a record in regard to Tasmania which is, I think, second to none in terms of my personal commitment to Tasmania. And as I said when I was down here the other day launching the Tasmanian package, that was not just something done in an election campaign. From day one of my Government, the night of the 5th of March, I said when Tasmania wiped the slate clean of Labor Representatives in the House, I said ok, that's happened, but I'm here to govern for Tasmania. I've delivered and more than delivered on every promise I made to Tasmania in regard to the Franklin and on every Land Council I've gone beyond what the recommendations were to take account of what I see as the special needs of Tasmania. So the package that I delivered here a week ago is in ... I would point out, as the Premier is concerned, that every single Tasmanian ought to be scared mindless of the Liberal and National Party policies in this campaign, because it represents a cut to Tasmania of about \$62.5 million. That's what their proposals mean both in terms of the loss to individual Tasmanians and to the State through the cutting of programs of their policies. Every Tasmanian before they go into that ballot box on the 24th of March should know that the contrast couldn't be starker. Prime Minister Hawke consistent with what he's done in the seven years, he's come up with an additional package now, positive increase in funds for Tasmania. The alternative, a slashing by \$62.5 million if the Liberals and National Party were to form a government.

JOURNALIST: How many seats do you think you'll pick up in Tasmania Mr Hawke?

PM: I'm looking hopefully at all of them, at all of them. Because in light of just what I've said, really, what Tasmanian concerned for himself or herself or their kids, could possibly vote for a coalition which is promising to slash \$62.5 million off Tasmania. So I believe that the appeal of Labor against our opponents is going to be strong in every electorate.

JOURNALIST: One seat, two seats?

PM: I would like to get the five.

JOURNALIST: Is the economy facing a rise in unemployment as a result of the economy contracting?

PM: No not a rise in unemployment. I believe that what we're going to see, and what we are seeing, is a slowing down of the economy. But you can have a situation where you can have a slowing down in growth without necessarily a rise in unemployment. What you've got to remember is that part of the economic management of this country under my Prime Ministership and our Government, has been, as I've said, this massive employment increase. I just want you to understand the implications of that and how it's made up. That's 1.6 million new jobs. And as I've said, that's five times faster than before, it's twice as fast as the rest of the world. It's been associated with an enormous increase in the participation rate. The participation rate is at its highest level ever. And in fact, just note this statistic. If in fact the participation rate today was the same as when I came to office, the unemployment rate would be 1.2%. That's a foundationally important statistic to have in your mind. If you had the participation rate of when I came to office the unemployment rate would be 1.2%. So what you're looking at is a slowing down of the economy deliberately engineered because we were operating at too high a level and bringing in too many imports. We've got to slow it down somewhat so that we can deal with the external account problem. But we will still have economic growth and still have employment growth.

JOURNALIST: ... keep the unemployment rate around that six per cent mark then?

PM: That's what we would be aiming at, about that order.

JOURNALIST: The seventh anniversary today, any celebration planned or anything like that?

PM: I couldn't think of a more idyllic place in which to be celebrating it. I've put my movements, if you like, and my holidays where my mouth is. Within the last three years twice I've come down at Christmas time at the end of a hectic parliamentary session to have a few days in Tasmania, because there's something very special about Tasmania as far as I'm concerned. People say well y'know, you haven't got the industry and so on that you've got in the mainland. That's true but the things that you have got here are fantastic. We've got to do our best to make sure that they are preserved, like this magnificent bridge in the background. We've got to see that that's protected. I like Tasmania. It's a good place to be on the seventh anniversary. And whereas seven years ago Tasmanians, because they were misled about the Franklin - you remember they were told then by the Opposition and they were told by the Hydro-Electric

Commission here that if you didn't dam the Franklin Tasmania wouldn't have the power needs that are required. The people of Tasmania were misled. It's been conceded since that that was not right. But we lost five seats then. So I'm here now seven years later and I hope it's on the edge of keeping of course the one we've got and getting the other four. That would be the best celebration I could have, post-dated for the 24th.

JOURNALIST: ... government has written to your Transport Minister expressing concern that Tasmania would be worse off and suffering after deregulation because of lack of flights and services and higher air fares. What can you say to alleviate those concerns?

PM: Yes. We have made it clear that we believe that the continuation of the two airline policy was something which was against the interests of Australia. I don't think there's anyone really can argue about that. It's been a matter of fascination for me that I'm supposed to be the man who looks after Sir Peter Abeles. Sir Peter Abeles and Ansett of course had a very cosy situation with the two airline policy. I've kicked the props from under that, as should happen. Now, I have said also that we will be monitoring the operation of the Australian aviation system after the end of the two airline policy to see that the interests of areas like Tasmania are protected. I have no reason to believe from what I have heard from the industry and what I've heard from my own Ministers, that Tasmania needn't have that fear. But I give the people of Tasmania this clear guarantee. We'll be monitoring what happens when the two airline system finishes because I will want to ensure that Tasmanians do not suffer.

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