



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF JOINT NEWS CONFERENCE WITH HON GERRY HAND,
MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ETHNIC
AFFAIRS, PARLIAMENT HOUSE - 27 JUNE 1990**

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

PM: Ladies and gentlemen, I'll ask Gerry to speak to the three press releases first, and I'll have something to say about the ERC decision, then we'll be open to questions on the immigration matters. And then after that I'll be available for any questions you have on any other matters.

HAND: First of all let me say that there were discussions around three topics yesterday in Cabinet. One was the program for the coming year, the question of the PRC nationals and changes to the way in which we'll address the question of the refugee and humanitarian cases in the future.

On the question of the program, last year you'll recall the upper planning level was for 140,000. This year it will be 126,000. The categories are in the sets of the Family Migration 64,000; the Skilled Migration 50,000; Humanitarian component 11,000; and the Special Eligibility category 1,000. Total 126,000.

The changes to the refugee humanitarian procedures brought about quite a deal of discussion in the Cabinet because they seek to, for the first time, bring under control what is a growing area. That is people who arrive in Australia and seek to change residence by claiming humanitarian or refugee status. Now, we're one of the last countries to be affected by this and it is quite a dramatic blowout in terms of going from one or two years waiting to in excess of six and rising rapidly, that is the time which people would have to wait to be processed.

So we're doing a number of things. Firstly we're putting the criteria, if you like, or the way in which people are assessed, into legislation. We'll be rejigging the DORS process so it's faster and quicker and therefore people aren't left waiting as long. Also the question of natural justice will be built into the process so that people are assured of getting their rights fully addressed.

This will enable us to do a number of things. Firstly, we'll be able to put people into a holding line, if you like, or queue of four years instead of automatically getting permanent residency which they do now. They'll be assessed and if they're found to be eligible for refugee status that will be granted. But the nexus between it and permanent residency will be broken and people will be given a temporary entry permit which they will hold for four years. At the end of that four year period they will be able to seek permanent residency and it will be granted on the basis of a position being found in the formal intake for that year.

In other words, no more add-ons or blowouts, a controlled approach, a disciplined approach to the whole program. Also whilst they're in that four year period they can be taken into account as the calculations are made when you examine the range of issues ... do when you're reaching the intake for that year. So in terms of the broader range of issues ... be addressed, they will become a factor in terms of the cost etc.

So two things – one is that it for the first time enables us to control the flow of people onshore into the program and secondly it doesn't give them an advantage over people offshore. In other words you can have people in a camp who are part of a three year intake program, or camp clearance program, who have to wait. And if you're one of the people in the third year you can understand them getting a bit upset with somebody who happens to land in Australia and going ahead of them in the queue. So it puts them into a queuing situation but in a balanced and orderly way.

The third area that we discussed which is linked to the asylum processes I've just addressed is the question of the PRC students. They will be granted a four year temporary entry permit. It will be in a special PRC category. They are not being assessed for asylum or in terms of refugee or humanitarian grounds. They will be given a special category of their own. This is the pre- June 20 group. They will at the end of that four year period be able to again seek permanent residence. That will be granted if a position is available to them in the program as determined by the Government at that time.

So again, they will be given certain rights in terms of family reunion as will the asylum people. That is spouse and dependent children which I point out is available to people who are here for over twelve months now studying or in a work situation. So that's nothing new. That is a continuation of what exists. Also the Finance Minister and myself will be reporting back to Cabinet very shortly on the other programs that they'll have access to.

PM: Thanks very much Gerry. In regard to the latter matter, the PRC nationals, I would obviously want to make some observations. Let me say at the outset that I'm obviously delighted with the decision which incorporates all the elements which I have consistently regarded as important in this matter. And may I say most particularly the decision reflects the original discussions that Gerry Hand and I had, and reflects the submission which he took to the Cabinet.

It needs to be said that it's not a simple thing to manage an issue of this kind in a way which is at the one time both humane and compassionate on the one hand, as it must be, and on the other is one which enables a suitable control and a practical administration of the issue. But I think that the Government has squarely faced this issue on the basis of the submission which Gerry brought to it and has approached the tragic events of last June in China and as far as has been reflected in this country in a way which gives a solution. It is on the one hand compassionate, meeting our humanitarian obligations, but on the other it gives the capacity to maintain control over the size and the structure of Australia's immigration program.

As far as the humanitarian aspects are concerned, the decision shows an appropriate sensitivity to the very difficult plight in which Chinese students and others in Australia at the time of Tienanmen found themselves. It fully confirms the undertakings that I have previously given publicly that no such Chinese national would be required to return to China against their will. Importantly it gives these people time, as they should be given, time to assess the situation in China before taking decisions about where their long term future lies.

Now I hope, and I've consistently expressed this hope, and I believe that most of the Chinese themselves hope, that the years ahead will see a turn for the better in China. Accordingly, the decisions that we've taken on the basis of the submission that Gerry brought to Cabinet, it gives the people concerned every reason for a sense of security without forcing them to commit themselves to make at this point an irrevocable decision about their future.

So that's as far as the humanitarian obligations that we have. As far as the element of control is concerned, as Gerry has pointed out and as you'll see from the decision, this is achieved by the concept of the special category for four years, and after which time the Government of the day can make appropriate decisions then about whether to extend the temporary residence for those who wish to stay or whether to grant permanent residency. And it creates the capacity for gearing the rate at which permanent residence is provided to the rate at which places become available under the program.

Let me say that no-one, neither Gerry nor myself nor anyone in the Cabinet, nor anyone else for that matter, can be definitive about the number of people in the special category who will choose to stay. It's impossible to be definitive about that. But expressing my own belief, it is this. That I think that many of those, very many of those, will choose to return to China, given the strength of attachment of the homeland which exists. But regardless of that, the decision gives us a fully workable framework in which to manage the situation. And it's relevant to note that in respect of the pre-June 20 category I think the latest count you've got Gerry, in your Department, of those in that category who have returned is now 1400. There are actually 1400 who have returned who were in that pre-June 20 group.

The final point I'd make is that obviously the decision also draws the distinction which I have consistently said should be drawn between those who were here before the 20th of June and the later arrivals. I might say finally that the decision that we've taken in this regard is fully consistent with our broader foreign policy posture towards China. That policy doesn't in any way neglect or disregard the changed situation in China since the events of last June. But rather it accepts the requirement upon us to respond to the impact of those events. At the same time, as you know, our policy is one which hopes for an improvement in the situation in China and I repeat now that my Government will do all that we can to try and work for an improvement of that relationship in the years ahead.

So as someone who's had a longstanding commitment to sound policy in this whole area of our relations with China and in the area of immigration, I repeat that I believe that the decision which has been made, and based upon the submission which Gerry brought to the Cabinet, is a most sensible and sensitive response to a complex and difficult situation. I take this opportunity of thanking Gerry Hand for the cooperation that we've had in this matter and which has been reflected in the decision taken by the Cabinet yesterday.

JOURNALIST: On the matter of the Chinese students, this statement seems to say quite clearly that if the Government is confident the situation in China is such that human rights are no longer duly at risk then these people won't get permanent residency. Is that so?

PM: That's a consideration that we make clear will affect the decision that we take. But that is also, as you will appreciate Laurie, in the same statement, that if in those circumstances people still want to say that they believe that they are at risk then they will not be forced to return. But as Gerry has pointed out in his observations and as the decision points out, that will then be relevant obviously to the question of whether they would get permanent status.

JOURNALIST: But you say quite clearly whether these nationals in the special category who wish to stay beyond the four years ... permanent residence will depend upon conditions then prevailing in China. It seems to mean only one thing - if the Government thinks the position is alright they don't get permanent residency. Isn't that so?

PM: We're making that quite clear. What I'm saying is it's two things. I've said consistently throughout that what the position is in China will be a relevant consideration. I've also said -

JOURNALIST: ... consideration in that sentence.

PM: But it's not a consideration as to whether they will be forced to go back. If they make a judgement against our judgement, if they make a judgement and put that their assessment is that they would be at risk, then what we are saying is, alright you make that judgement, we will not force you to go back and in those circumstances ... there'd be no expectation that you would get permanent residence. You wouldn't.

JOURNALIST: ... guaranteed then that they can stay ... Politicians, even yourself, have been known to break the odd promise. What guarantee have they got?

PM: Well Laurie, you are battling indeed my friend to try and continue that which doesn't exist, a conflict or a contradiction between any part of the decisions that have been announced yesterday or the elements of which I referred to before. At all points the question of the situation in China has been regarded as relevant.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Just a minute. Let me finish the answer to the question will you. The situation in China has been regarded ... at all times. That is referred to again here. At no point, including my first statement or at any subsequent point, did I say that these people would be getting immediate permanent residence. There is an assumption, an assumption made by some that that was said or that was intended. It was not said nor was it intended. The intention that there has been, and which is reflected in the decision of the Cabinet is this, that there is a special category of these people who came here before the 20th of June. That has been endorsed. That has meant now that these people are not required to make any decision now, commit themselves, for four years, in the hope, which has been a consistent hope, that by that time the circumstances will have changed in a way which would make the return of these people to China a safe exercise. But they are given that time. They are not required to commit themselves now. That would've been the most inhumane thing to do to say you are going to be required in some immediate sense to make a judgement of commitment about whether you want to break your ties or not. So they have four years. And in that period it is our hope, and I would judge the hope of the great majority of these people, that the situation in China will change to the point at which there should be no risk about their return. And in those circumstances the question of permanent residence is an irrelevancy. There was never any intention when these people came that they were coming here to be permanent residents. That was not their intention, nor ours. But in the situation created by the events of June of last year we had to deal with that. Not to create a certainty of permanent residency but to create for them a certainty now that they would not have to commit themselves to making a judgement about this issue premature. And that's been done. What we are saying still is if even against the judgement that we make at that point that there is no risk, if they make an alternative judgement then they won't be getting permanent residency here but they will not be returned against their will. Now those things are crystal clear, have been and remain so.

JOURNALIST: ... Mr Hawke that it won't be in legislation and governments can change and Prime Ministers can change -

PM: Of course Prime Ministers can change. I mean, with respect, don't be ridiculous. I can't, in regard to this matter, or any other, I can't bind future governments, can't bind future governments. What you can do now as a responsible and compassionate government is to lay down a framework which you believe will recommend itself to

the government of the day. I would regard it as extremely unlikely that any government four years hence would take a different view. That is, if the situation were then that the judgement were that it would be a risk situation for people to return, I think they would make the judgement that we do now, that they should be granted permanent residence but the timing of the permanency, as has been pointed out, to be fitted into the program. Equally, I would regard it as very unlikely that any future government, if the situation were that the judgement were made that the situation in China was not such as to put a returnee at risk, that any government then would say well ok, no permanent residence but if you say after this period of time you still believe you're at risk and you don't want to return, alright you can stay but no permanent residence. Now, I can't say that that will be the position of the Government in four years time or in ten years time on this matter or on any other what the position will be. But the responsibility of the Government today is to make decisions relevant today and which you think would be an appropriate basis for decision making four years hence. That's what we've done.

JOURNALIST: ... postponing your decision.

PM: I don't - you're trying very hard to create an issue that isn't there. What has been made clear, which for one reason or another you don't want to accept, is this. That we have said there ought to be a period of time set aside within which you don't require these people prematurely to make a decision. Now why you don't want to understand or accept it I don't know but it's perfectly clear. It would be wrong in the interests of these people to say we require you now to make a decision. The humane thing is to say look we will give you a period here in which you don't need to make a decision that will irrevocably commit yourself on the basis of an attitude that you have now towards a regime or the condition in your country. It is relevant to say well here is a period, we've picked on four years, which seems a reasonable period of time, to say alright you have security here, you have security here, you don't need to commit yourself in that period. At that point it's our hope, and I would suggest the overwhelming hope, the hope of the overwhelming number of those people, that the situation will be such that they can return without risk. It would be quite improper, it would be quite improper, and I don't think anyone has questioned this despite your incapacity to understand it at the moment, no-one has questioned, I think, the concept that there should be some period within which they are not forced to make a decision. That has been at the basis of the discussion that Gerry and I had at the beginning of this, it's been at the basis of all that I've said and it's at the basis of the decision made by the Cabinet.

JOURNALIST: ... Government's decided to bring out 114,000 people who are perfectly safe in their own countries -

PM: Has decided to bring out what?

JOURNALIST: 114,000 people who are perfectly safe in their own countries.

PM: What's this 114,000?

JOURNALIST: 50,000 skilled migrants and 64,000 family reunion ... administrative difficulties and defer decisions -

PM: ... subtracting the humanitarian from the ... The figure is 124,000.

HAND: 126,000.

PM: 126,000.

JOURNALIST: Bringing out 114,000 people who are perfectly safe in their own countries and setting up these difficulties and these administrative blocks for people who are not safe in their own countries.

HAND: No that's not true.

PM: It's simply not true.

HAND: Not true at all. All people who come to our shores here have the right to seek refuge under the DORS program, and that's not being tampered with. What we're in fact doing is seeking to improve the servicing of those people by streamlining and improving, or lessening the time they have to wait where they are unable to get very much assistance at all. So quite the opposite is the case. We're in fact doing what we can to improve that and to bring them into the system and, well, if you like, make their position more clearer, quicker. So I don't think your question is right. I think we're doing exactly the opposite to what you're suggesting.

JOURNALIST: The fact remains though that you haven't entirely removed the uncertainty for the Chinese students.

HAND: There's a good – could I just ... something before Bob talks. Look, a large number of the Chinese student delegations that came to see me, there was a very strong view put that they shouldn't be put in a position of being made to choose permanency. Now you've got to understand that. So we're not doing these people a wrong at all. People quite clearly came to me here in this building and said we don't want to be put in a position of permanency, we'd like an extension of the time we're allowed to stay here because some of us here in this room want to in fact return home, quickly. And we don't want to have to make a choice because that will further jeopardise us. So what we've tried to do is marry up a whole range of views in the fairest possible way. I think if you stand back and look at what we've done here there is obviously a right of Government to assess things in four years time and there's a right of the individual as it also says here to make their assessment as to what they choose to do. It's the individual's right that we're trying to protect. I mean, every editorial in the country said these people had to be looked after, and what we've tried to do in the fairest possible way is meet those sorts of community demands over a long period of time.

PM: Let me make the point. You say we haven't removed the uncertainty. Let me make this point –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Just me make it quite clear that at no point did I or Gerry or anyone speaking for the Government on this issue over recent weeks say that they were going to be given immediate permanent residence. I mean – ... shake your head. Read it through and see that was never never said. Now for people then to say that an uncertainty was created on the expectation that that was their interpretation, what was intended that immediate permanent residence was going to be given, we can't be responsible for that because it was never said and never intended. And as Gerry has said now, in terms of people that have come and spoken to him and what any intelligent analysis would lead you to conclude, is that overwhelmingly these people who didn't come to Australia to become permanent residents – they came here for a limited purpose, to go back to China – then obviously what they will want is a situation within which they have the security of being here, not being forced back, within which they don't have to make some premature decision, some premature decision which could cut off their ties with their homeland. And that's precisely what's been given. So if you talk about uncertainty then there is no uncertainty being created by anything that we've said. Now as to the future, we have created a framework within which they know that if the

situation in China has not changed then that they would still have that at-risk situation. Then the decision has been made that they will get permanency, the timing of which, as Gerry has said and the decision points out, will be in terms of fitting into the program. But they also have the certainty, that even if against the judgement of the Government of the time, that what is being said now is that they should not be returned against their will.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: There is no greater certainties which they can either expect have been given in any other country in the world or which could be responsibly given by this Government.

JOURNALIST: Should a student want to stay in Australia after four years but the situation in China has improved, according to the first paragraph he wouldn't have to go back, but according to the second paragraph that would be a consideration on his being allowed to remain.

PM: Really, do you not understand something that's perfectly ... What would then be determined, if he says against the judgement that it is safe to go back, is ok, what has been clearly said now, you can stay but it would relate to the question of permanency or temporary residence. He wouldn't be getting, he would not have any expectation of being granted permanent residence in that situation. And that's some -

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: ... I have other interpretations Laurie.

JOURNALIST: I just seek ... clarification. You say none of these people will be forced to go back to China against their will. Your press statement says quite clearly they will only get permanent residence if the Government, the Australian Government decides in four years the Peking Government is not on the nose. Now doesn't that create a situation where you have people who are allowed to stay here permanently, but they don't get permanent residence and isn't that absurd?

PM: It's not absurd because we say, and have said all along, that no person will be forced to be returned against their will. Because you could have a situation which I think you could easily contemplate where the general judgement was made, general judgement was made that it was safe to return, that the change was such that people returning wouldn't be at risk. We believe you could have a situation where an individual could say well you might say that about the situation in China generally, but I'm telling you, I'm telling you that it's my judgement that because of some circumstance back there in the part where I come from, I could be at risk. Now we're simply saying if you've got that situation we're going to be saying alright, we're not going to return you against your will, not going to return you against your will, if that's your judgement, but be it clear in those circumstances you will not get the status of permanent residency in this country. You'll get a rollover of a temporary, a reissuing of your temporary permit.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, if after four years -

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: If after four years the Government, Australian Government determines that Peking is back on the right track and conditions are suitable for people to return, what will happen to dependent spouses and children of the Chinese people who come here ... four year period. What will be their status?

PM: Well, that will be -

HAND: The same as the individual concerned.

PM: Yes.

HAND: And they'll come in the same way, they join their spouse here in the same way, in the same - they have the same standing.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, on the same issue, but a slightly different tack, is it consistent to say that Chinese students will be given a discretion to decide at the end of the four year period whether they go back or not, at the same time as changes ... be made to the Migration Act, an application of the UN definition of refugees. ... two different types of refugees - one group gets to make their own choice whether they go back or not, another group ... tougher rules on their ...

PM: We've said in respect of the pre-20th of June Chinese nationals, they are a special category. The specialty about their category is, as we've said, and I would have thought was quite clear but it doesn't seem to be, that as far as that category is concerned the one thing that will distinguish them is that if they say in those circumstances that their judgement is that it's not safe to return, then they will not be forced to go back against their will. But they will have no prospect of permanent residence in that situation.

JOURNALIST: What about a Fijian or a Sri Lankan -

PM: No -

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

HAND: On that, all other people have the right to DORS.

PM: Right to DORS.

HAND: Right? Now, that's not diminished. So the post-June 20 people -

PM: ... the same.

HAND: - in the same boat. They apply through the DORS process. There's been a decision taken in regard to the pre-June 20 PRC nationals which put them in a particular category on their own. The rest of the process is exactly the same in terms of people's rights. We're building into legislation a definition that ... now applied through a convention and we'll be streamlining to pick up the point about people in no-person's land, if you like, trying to fast track and get decisions for them in line with the earlier questions.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hand, why has there been a cut in the migrant intake and how did you arrive at the number of 14,000, rather than 20,000 or 30 or 40,000?

HAND: Well, first of all there's a number of the categories that are demand driven and we've made an assessment of the demands based on projections from overseas posts. We've also, we're determined to maintain a degree of skills in those particular categories where they apply. The family reunion component has been held at roughly the same as last year and generally we weighed up a whole range of issues. I think by the fact that the Cabinet met for so long is a fair indication that some of the claims made in recent times about it's an issue that doesn't get much consideration bears a bit of changing.

JOURNALIST: Have you ...

HAND: Well, I'd say there wasn't a member of the Cabinet who didn't make lengthy interventions into the discussion and that includes the economic ministers. There were, as I said, a whole – all of the issues that have been flagged that should be discussed in a debate like this were talked about in great detail. The question of the new asylum processes and the reasons for bringing that into place, the issues that are contained in that move are also factors that were brought into the debate as we looked towards the future. So all of the issues – economic, the environment, the effects on discussions or the effects on the States and various capital cities. Recently I've had a State Ministers meeting where that fact was brought forward by them. I've put in place a process for detailed discussions to take place. Some of the outer States or smaller States are, in fact, seeking more of a share of the intake and so we're looking at ways in which we can do that. Currently some designated areas get five points if you go there. But the trick is to hold people there when they get there. ... get the five points and it doesn't quite work out as successfully as what it should. So those States will have to look at how they can address that question and we'll do that with them.

JOURNALIST: ... check on some figures. I think you said at the beginning about 1400 of the pre-June 20 group had already gone back ...

PM: Between July and the latest date ...

JOURNALIST: What does that leave the total in this special category and what, and do you know how –

PM: About 19,400.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: There are about 19,400 pre-June the 20th still here.

JOURNALIST: That's 19,400 less about 1,400.

PM: No, that's the 1,400 taken into account.

JOURNALIST: And do you know how many of that 19,400 had in fact overstayed their visas already at June 20?

PM: No, I don't know the answer to that question.

HAND: I'm not sure of that figure. I can find the exact figure out for you, I think. In terms of illegals –

PM: Beg your pardon?

HAND: – there were some certainly in that category. There were some certainly in that category, but –

JOURNALIST: But they are being in exactly the same ...

HAND: Well, you see, given the circumstances and the events at the time, we've tried, I think it's almost impossible to separate people, given they were all in the same situation, the same event affected both those groups and so for that purpose they've been grouped together.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, your statement –

PM: I'm sorry, Milton first.

JOURNALIST: If you were a major employer –

PM: If I were what?

JOURNALIST: If you were a major employer and you were searching for good staff and a PRC who was involved in one of these categories applied to you for a job, would you be prepared to take that person on, invest a substantial amount of money in the training of that person, educating that person in the job in the full knowledge that in four years time that person might have to go back to China?

PM: Well, it's a judgement you'd have to make between those who were available for the job. If you thought that this person was the ... person available, I think I would and –

HAND: I've got an example of that where I was approached by people from the academic world with some students saying look they don't want permanent residency, but if they could be given some sort of extension, temporary extension, we would in fact be able to employ them.

JOURNALIST: ... that's the academic world.

HAND: Well, well, I mean, it is, I suppose, an employment situation. It's an example of if people have the skills people are after, they'll tend to employ them I think.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister –

PM: ... I don't want to avoid ... The implication of your question is that because under this decision that person hasn't been guaranteed permanent residence now, is that a risk from the employer's point of view? Well, I suppose you can say it hasn't got the same certainty as if a decision from the employer's point of view as if a decision were taken now. But I would think in the circumstances it would be a risk worth taking.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, your statement says that ... rolling over temporary residence which indicates that if these people after four years want an extension of their temporary residence, they might be able to get that?

PM: Not might, not might. I mean, why do you say might?

JOURNALIST: Well, if they don't choose to apply for permanent residence?

PM: Yes, well there's no problem there, but in regard to the rest of the category, there is no might about it. They can and will be able to get it.

JOURNALIST: And do you also say that the holders of these special permits will be able to work?

PM: Yes.

JOURNALIST: Now is there going to be any limit on the number of extensions of temporary residence these people can qualify for and if not, considering that you have expressed concern about people already rorting the system, aren't we just allowing people, some people just to stay without ever having to make any decision either way?

PM: Well, when you make the commitment that no person will be returned against their will, then that follows, but what you've got to understand is that they have to

make judgements about the disadvantages from their point of view of not having permanency of residence and all the advantages that are attached to that. But I mean –

JOURNALIST: But we don't know what those disadvantages and advantages are yet?

PM: Well, because the Cabinet has got to make the decision about what precise benefits are going to ... attached. I mean, the press release makes it clear ... be coming back after the discussion with the Ministers concerned –

HAND: Finance.

PM: – to Cabinet in the near future.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, do you expect –

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: – that overall levels of immigration in future years be cut back further? Is this a trend and do you think 126,000 is about right? I think you've said in the past 140,000 is about right?

PM: Yes, well, the question in two parts. Neither I nor anyone else for the Government will say or would want to say now what the future levels of migration will be. I think it's – let me be quite direct about this, Amanda, – it is clear that within the Government, as within the community, there are some different points of view about appropriate levels of migration. But Gerry has brought forward, and the Cabinet has accepted, what he thinks is appropriate at this point taking into account the whole range of factors including the current economic situation. But, as has been pointed out and as we discussed in the Cabinet, there will be at the end of this year, in November I think Gerry, a conference on the whole question of immigration and population levels under the auspices of the Bureau of Immigration Research in Gerry's Department. We have also, as a result of the discussion yesterday, the suggestion was made and was accepted by the Cabinet, we should also within the Structural Adjustment Committee have a particular examination of the question of population levels and the implications of those levels for future development of the economy. So, out of our own internal Government considerations and also we will take into account the things that will be said that emerge from that conference at the end of this year, we will be in a position to be better informed about what sort of future shape the program should have. So, no, the short answer, Amanda, to your question is you should not take this decision, which represents Gerry, I think only a 4,000 reduction from –

HAND: In real terms.

PM: – the outcome for this year, 88–89, is expected to be 130,000. That's for this year – we've nearly finished – well, for the year just finished, the outcome is expected to be 130 – well, the program was 140,00, but the outcome is expected to be 130. And so I'm saying that what has been decided for 90–91 is 4,000 below that. I don't think, certainly Gerry didn't put it nor did we make a decision in terms of saying this reflects what the pattern of future levels will be.

JOURNALIST: Did the question of community tensions play any part in the Cabinet discussion as opposed to infrastructure problems and environmental concerns and economic problems, the question of community tension ...

PM: I think in the course of what was a very long discussion the question of attitudes within the community were referred to. I don't think it was, you would say in any

sense a predominant or overwhelming part of the discussion, but there were references to it.

HAND: I think in the terms of the asylum area, trying to get not only control over that area, but also take into account the tensions that can develop by people who are put in a situation of queue jumping, that sometimes has in the past created tensions. That will be now overcome by this disciplined approach with the onshore arrivals.

JOURNALIST: Where does that leave the Cambodian boat people who are arriving, those who are here and potentially those who may come?

HAND: Well, in terms of the Cambodian people here, they're all applying for refugee status under DORS and that process is continuing along. When they make their recommendations we'll be able to inform people what they are. I make no comment about the Cambodians at all.

JOURNALIST: Will they be able to stay in the same way as the Chinese students

HAND: I make no comment, Laurie.

JOURNALIST: - who don't want to go home.

HAND: Well, I can't make a comment about the Cambodians because there is a process in place of which I end up being a part of and I don't intend to make a comment about it.

JOURNALIST: Well, seriously at the end of that process -

HAND: Well, I have been, well hang on -

JOURNALIST: - refugees, they will be in the same position as the Chinese students who don't want to go home.

HAND: I'm trying to be very serious about it because, given the rights of the people concerned, I don't want to jeopardise those rights by me making a comment about it given that I'm part of the decision-making process. It would be grossly improper of me to do so. It would be in fact, lead perhaps, if it was a rejection, quite likely to a intervention in the court. So I don't intend to make any comment about the likely outcome of the DORS process or what may happen. Because there are three boats, as you know, all in different stages of the DORS process and for that reason I'd ask people to respect their rights by not asking me to make a prediction about what may happen to the Cambodian -

JOURNALIST: ... what does that say about Mr Hawke and Senator Evans' comments very strongly suggesting that these people were not genuine refugees?

HAND: Well, I suggest you address that question to them. They're not formally part of the decision process like me.

JOURNALIST: Well, I can certainly answer that. What Gerry is saying, and rightly saying, that as Minister, the recommendations of the DORS Committee come to him and he's got to make a decision. He is intrinsically part of that decision-making process and for that reason he has said he is not going to make any comment. And it is a perfectly proper response that he makes.

JOURNALIST: But you don't ... would jeopardise their right.

PM: Well, I don't believe so and what I'm concerned about and what the Cabinet, importantly, is concerned about is that we deal with a situation in which, as Gerry indicated before and pointed out to the Cabinet, there has been a massive increase from what had been an average, I think, Gerry of something like up to 500 applicants, up until last year where at the end of last year it just massively soared to something like 4,000.

HAND: We're heading for about a six year waiting period unless we do something –

PM: And in –

HAND: – people going through the process. Thus you've got to do something and it is, the signs are it's going to get dramatically worse. So that's why we've had to adopt or bring about these changes ... don't diminish people's rights.

PM: And which was not just, not just happening, as Gerry pointed out in his submission, not only just happening in Australia, but was happening in Europe, Canada and other relevant places. Now, what I'm concerned, as Prime Minister to point out, is that in regard to that situation, as I said, it's not just reflected towards Cambodia, but in regard –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: But if you want to, you know, just not be selective and remember all I said, I made the point quite clearly, quite clearly, I said whether it was Irish – I said it doesn't matter who it is – we're not going to have, as far as we're concerned, a situation where people can just arrive –

JOURNALIST: There are not many Irish boat people, Prime Minister.

PM: ... Now wait a minute. Well –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: However, there are other countries, and it doesn't matter, I mean whoever it is, think you can just arrive here and that's it. And indeed, Gerry brought the submission along yesterday which, in a range of ways, both directed towards legislation, administration and interpretation that will make it clear that as far as this country is concerned that can't continue.

HAND: Can I just give you one example about there aren't many Irish boat people. What one country just experienced was a jumbo jet landing on the tarmac and emptying out everybody on board and taking off and leaving them there. And that country's having enormous difficulty getting rid of them. There are three or four Australians in Canada seeking political refugee status because the process takes ten years –

PM: Ten years.

HAND: So therefore they can stay there for ten years. This is a major problem facing nations like us –

PM: That's right.

HAND: – and that's why we have to take this approach.

PM: Good way of getting a ten year work permit.

HAND: ... good laugh about the poor old Irish boat people, but I tell you what it's not just a question of boats. It's fast travel of large numbers of people moving around the world and you need to have some control over the flow of those people coming in to ...

JOURNALIST: Will the work being done for the Structural Adjustment Committee of Cabinet within the Departments, say Treasury and Finance, be made available at this conference to take place in Melbourne in November on population and its environmental and economic ...

PM: Yes, well it will depend, obviously, how far we're able to process the work, David, in the Structural Adjustment Committee. But clearly, we would want as a Government and Gerry, from his Department, we would want to have as much constructive input into that conference as we possibly could. And if our consideration of the Structural Adjustment Committee has taken us to a point where it enables us from that source to put material in, we would do it. I mean, I think the important thing, David, is this, that we, and it's certainly the attitude of the Government, that we recognise that the question of immigration is assuming a larger degree of interest in this country. Not only the question of immigration, but obviously it's related to population levels, what are regarded as desirable population targets for 20, 30, 40 years down the track. Now these issues have developed a growing significance, there's a growing level of interest in the country. Now as a, as a Government, we don't want to impose answers. I mean, if we can assist debate and constructive debate in the community, we want to do it. I mean, I think that's our responsibility.

JOURNALIST: ... student from China. Is the Government continuing to accept the students from China and how do we ...

PM: I'm sorry, I couldn't understand. Did you get the question?

JOURNALIST: Is the Government continuing to accept students from mainland China?

PM: Is continuing to what?

JOURNALIST: Accept students from mainland China and refunds on the ...

PM: Yes, sure, and the refunds. The question, could I tackle the latter part first in regard to the refunds. This was a matter that was considered in Cabinet last night. Let me say this, that in regard to those students. I mean, there are two categories, the students, the people in China who have paid and who haven't left China and there are those here who have met difficulties in particular institutions. Now the Cabinet last night considered this matter and the Ministers concerned which most directly, Minister Dawkins, but he's going to meet with, there's going to be discussions with ... but particularly with the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. They are to report back to Cabinet on the mechanisms that need to be accepted in regard to meeting Australia's obligations in this matter. They will be met, but they have to come back with further details about the process in which this will be done. Now, in regard to the first part of your question about accepting students, the question of the, the ELICOS program in particular is one which is being reviewed by the Minister, but generally speaking, our view is that we want here in Australia to develop the concept of the export of education. Now I say this subject to correction, but I think in the last year, it brought in something of the order of about \$100 million in export income and we see it as something that is capable, both of providing a required service to people in the region and also a good export income earner for Australia. But we have to be quite frank and acknowledge that there have been difficulties, obviously, in the way in which the scheme has operated and the Minister will be bringing submissions to Cabinet to have a form of appropriate regulation of this

industry so that the difficulties that have, have operated in that area, problems for the institutions and particularly problems for the students, will not recur in the future and he'll be coming back to the Cabinet with further submissions on ...

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke what response have you had from the Cambodian Government to our ...

PM: I can't – I don't want to avoid the question, but what I can say to you is this. That there have been very, as I'm informed, very constructive discussions have taken place, and they are still continuing. In those circumstances it just wouldn't be appropriate to go to any detail on them. But let me say this. I am hopeful from what I've been told from the discussions that there will be a very constructive outcome from them. But I am not in the position to go to the details until they are completed.

JOURNALIST: In what form are they continuing, Mr Hawke, officials ...

PM: At the official level I understand.

JOURNALIST: Are the officials still in Cambodia.

PM: I don't know whether the officials are still there or whether it is being conducted from here. But what I was told just within the last twenty-four hours is that the discussions are continuing and whether we've still got people there, I don't know the answer to that. But I repeat what I've said to Geoff, they have been very useful and constructive discussions and I think there will be a positive outcome from them.

JOURNALIST: outcome, do you mean forced repatriation?

PM: I not, I'm not going to any further point from what I've said.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: I've got nothing to add to what I've said. Discussions are going on and those discussions will not be helped by any comment I would make about the likely outcome from them.

JOURNALIST: The eight thousand Chinese nationals who have applied already for the permanent residency, where do they fit in to the new scheme of things?

PM: Well they – what's been said – it's referred to the in the release I think. It suggested that they would probably be better going back into the general class category, because while they are in the queue they do not get the same sponsorship rights. So it's suggested, I think that it's referenced to –

HAND: All the same possible assistance –

PM: All the same possible – a reference is made here in the press release to it.

HAND: Third paragraph.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: If they choose to persist with their permanent residency applications they may believe that that offers them more certainty.

PM: And we are not saying don't do that and what we are also saying is if after that, they can still go back into the category.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke what you said on the ... does that mean that Cabinet has to at least accept it in principle?

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: Does that mean that Cabinet has decided in principle that the Government will have to make some funds available to ensure the proper and full return of moneys paid out, either by the way of grants, or loans to institutions?

PM: We are accepting a responsibility in regard to students. Let me put it that way. We are accepting responsibility in regard to students. And the method in which that responsibility will be discharged is a matter of discussion between the Ministers concerned to report back to Cabinet in the very near future.

JOURNALIST: And it's going to cost Prime Minister ...

PM: There will be a cost. Yes there will be a cost -

JOURNALIST: Mr Hand -

PM: You can't discharge that responsibility without a cost.

JOURNALIST: On the social services question, could you explain what the hold up is about making a decision about access to health services social security benefits? Is there any assumption that this group, the Chinese group, might not be able to get those, that support?

HAND: You shouldn't make any assumptions about anything until we go back to Cabinet and that will be done shortly, between Ralph Willis and myself consulting with other Ministers in the Cabinet. And that will be done very quickly and announced before the program commences.

JOURNALIST: Why wasn't that done before the latest program was -

HAND: Pardon?

JOURNALIST: Why wasn't that done before yesterday's Cabinet meeting. You've been on this for months haven't you?

HAND: Pardon?

JOURNALIST: You've been working on this for months -

HAND: I've been working on this for quite some time, yes.

JOURNALIST: So why weren't those consultations conducted in advance?

HAND: Well there needs to be more work done. It's a very complex set of issues that we are going to be looking at and the judgement was, which I supported, that we needed to do some more work looking at the range of areas in which assistance could be provided. Now there can be information supplied on what other governments in fact supply. And you will see that you can start from virtually nothing and work your way through to full rights, in terms of if you had permanent residency. Now what we have to do is make judgements and do some costings and continue to do what we have been doing in the way of costings and judgements. That will be done. The Cabinet

was of the view there needs to be more consultation on this issue between departments, and I think that that is proper and will be done very quickly.

JOURNALIST: If you put them in the special category why shouldn't they be entitled to full rights?

HAND: In a sense of social security etc?

JOURNALIST: Yes.

HAND: Well that is obviously something that could be looked at, but it is not a suggestion that was considered yesterday.

JOURNALIST: ... reunion program have full social security rights -

HAND: Pardon?

JOURNALIST: The people who come out under the family reunion program -

HAND: They do.

JOURNALIST: Come out with the expectation of immediate full social security privileges.

HAND: They do. They do. They certainly do. That's right.

JOURNALIST: these people if ... in a different category?

HAND: These people who now come in, in a situation of arrival here, and go into the queuing system, that is the four year period, before they are eligible for permanency, we'll be announcing as a result of these Cabinet discussions, what their rights will be in terms of access to various programs. Now the Chinese group are in the same category.

JOURNALIST: Isn't that tantamount to putting some pressure on them to return?

HAND: To return to China?

JOURNALIST: Yes.

HAND: No. I wouldn't have thought so.

JOURNALIST: They could be given some ...

PM: Of course they would, of course they would -

HAND: Well first of all, as I said, because the fact that they have been here over twelve months they are entitled to bring their spouse and children out here. Now that's the first thing. Now in a lot of other countries that doesn't happen. In the terms of the range of social type issues that they, or programs they would be able to access, we're making some assessment on that. And continuing to make assessment on that. Now I mean there is no, I think you are going to find out by comparison, they're getting fairly well treated.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister on another matter -

PM: Yes sure.

JOURNALIST: Do you support the dismissal by Mr Keating of the views of the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank, and do you approve of the way Mr Keating very publicly dismissed those views?

PM: You refer to his dismissal of those views. I don't know. I haven't read the speech. I've seen the press report of it. I don't know whether he mentions the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank. Let me say this, that I fully endorse the remarks of my friend and colleague Paul Keating, the Treasurer, the Deputy Prime Minister. I fully endorse his remarks. It follows as a matter of logic, having given you that answer, what the answer to the second question is.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hand earlier on you made a reference to no more blowouts. I took it to be in relation to the refugee-humanitarian area. Is that right?

HAND: I'm talking about by moving to control what is obviously a rapidly growing component we are going to be faced with, that there will be no possibility in the system, if we follow the system that I've outlined here today, that is, they will be formally brought into the program and that's the object of the exercise. I mean they will be formally brought into the program. They'll be able to be addressed in terms of when you are making assessments year to year, what that figure ought to be. And so it is yet another move to make sure that we are addressing the question of the annual intake in a proper and orderly way. And if you look at what we've done so far this year, we've reviewed the regulations. We've moved to have the population council work on issues that have arisen in the general community. We've got the bureau holding the conference and a whole range of papers being produced. We are about to start after we've finished this exercise the secondary stage review of the regulations. So by the end of the year we are going to have a package of things in place which will give us the most control we've ever had over the immigration intake ever before. And that's the purpose of the whole exercise.

JOURNALIST: How can you guarantee no blowouts in the refugee and humanitarian category ... unfortunate potential for ... new refugee situation and international pressure to reduce the overcrowded camps in South East Asia?

HAND: Well you see there is a three year camp clearance program going on now which we are ahead of schedule, and any other situation that develops overnight, we would have to look at that as we have in the past and make judgement on it. But if they are brought in under some, or land here, and a situation develops, they will be introduced into the program in an orderly way. No more putting on top of the program large numbers of people. They'll be queued and brought in in a discipline way and that's the only way you can have proper planning.

JOURNALIST: But if the peace process fell apart in Cambodia for example, would -

HAND: Well I am not going to make any comment about Cambodia. I know you would like me to but I don't want to jeopardise the rights of the individuals concerned by making any comment about their position.

JOURNALIST: Do you feel that the Premiers are starting a process that - although it won't be fully completed tomorrow - is likely to lead to more fundamental changes in financial relations?

PM: If you look at what they've been saying they have taken their concern beyond just the area of Federal-State financial relations, and properly so. And you will see from what I have to say tomorrow that I have myself been thinking in some detail about the whole question of Federal-State relations going beyond the question of our financial relations. And I'll be making some comments tomorrow which, you will see, express that concern and deal with it. I think without, I don't want to pre-empt what

I'm going to say tomorrow, but I think it's fair to say this. I think as a nation it's becoming increasingly clear that we do have to examine, in much more detail and with much more commitment, the nature of the Federal-State relationship. Not with a view to the Commonwealth scoring off the States or vice versa, but to try and address the issue of how we best deliver services to people and to look at how best we co-operate to create a competitive, efficient economy. And to the extent that the States are giving evidence of their concern about these issues, I welcome it and it's, as you will see, totally consonant with what I'll be saying myself.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke are you disposed to accept the six points that apparently all the States have now agreed to at the initiative of Premier Bannon? This united front, does that make it very hard for the Commonwealth to reject it, or refute it?

PM: The common front. I've got a note here I think of the Premiers', reduced, I think it's down now to six points. No I think that the fact that the States have been talking together is (a) not unusual - because it is not the first that it has happened - (b) I welcome it, and (c) there does seem to be from what John Bannon has issued, plus what I can judge from a direct personal conversation I had with him in Adelaide on Saturday, there is a recognition in the States of the need to have a more constructive co-operation in a whole range of areas. That's reflected in their statement. As I said in the answer to the previous question, I welcome that.

JOURNALIST: Do you accept the idea of rolling, a rolling ... program, ... funding?

PM: Not necessarily. No. I think the concept of tying hands of the Commonwealth as tightly as that in terms of macro-economic management has got drawbacks. But having said that I can, we can, understand, both Paul and I can understand the concerns that they have about trying to have a greater degree of certainty in their financial situation. But let me make the point Michelle that in regard to a financial position of the States, certainly about revenue is one thing, but they still have an autonomy in regard to outlays. I think the figures are that for this last year if you look at own purpose outlays, the States' own purpose outlays increased by 4.6 per cent real. And ours by less than one per cent. So if you are going to have the total picture it's no good just saying well they have some uncertainty about revenues. Whatever uncertainty they had about revenues, whatever decline they had in own source revenues, and whatever decision we'd taken last year which involved a reduction in their expectations about our outlays to them, and what was their income from us, despite that, the picture in this last year has been 4.6 per cent real increase in their own purpose outlays and less than one per cent in ours. OK?

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: Are you happy with the standards of ... Ministers as Senator Richardson seemed to be implying in his comments about Senator Button?

PM: Geoff, you're trying to get some legs on that one are you? The move on the leadership which you are running every week or so. Well I'll try to disappoint you as much as I can Geoff so that you don't crank that one up again, it seems to amuse you, take up your time, groundless. No I don't have different standards Geoff. I must say, if I can, giving you a plus, a tick, rather than knocking you, I thought that the reaction of your paper towards the Button statement was a reasonable one. If I look at this Gallery as a whole, the beat up of Button on this last occasion was most, pre-eminently, in one stable, one part of one stable. I thought the way you treated it, the way that most treated it, that is with a rather dignified yawn, was appropriate and -

JOURNALIST: ... Senator Richardson

PM: I think Senator Richardson, as I've seen the subsequent statements, is at ease, at peace as he should be.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister if the statement from the Brotherhood of St Laurence was a bloody disgrace and unchristian, what's Senator Richardson suggestion that Senator Button should be sacked?

PM: Well, I don't know that would it describe it as unchristain. And I don't think that he wants him sacked.

JOURNALIST: Well what was the difference between Senator Button's remarks in May or June -

PM: I don't What was that?

JOURNALIST: What were the differences between Senator Button's remarks in May which ...

PM: I read the transcript. After I saw your dashing headlines Glenn and the crisis that I was confronted with and the test of my leadership I thought my God, terrible, I better go and see this transcript. The Australian has got me skewered and Milne's got me done. I'm really on the rack. I better read this transcript. I went to it with trepidation Glenn. I thought here Hawkey your leadership is right on the line boy. Button's blown it, criticised the Government heavily. And I was almost shaking, I could hardly read it. But then when I read it Glenn you will find that there was no breach of Government policy. There was no criticism of the Government. There was no breach of what I'd suggested as to the way he should conduct himself. It was one of those cases Glenn dear boy where most of your colleagues got it right and you had a bit too much of a tremble.

JOURNALIST: ... the first time round Senator Button's first statement which did create an outburst, an outcry in the Government, didn't seem to be much more than what he said on Sunday.

PM: I think that that's not the case and certainly a number of my colleagues, as well as Paul, thought that way. And in regard to this, and on this occasion it has caused no concern at all. It was only in part of your stable Amanda that - and its good to see this solidarity - that's very good.

JOURNALIST: ... why the first thing Senator Button said ... cause and outrage -

PM: Well it may be confusing you, or your part of the stable. All I can say is that I think generally speaking the Gallery got this one right.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke you said that there should be an ending made to public airings of differences ... Senator Button said that he disagreed, or said ... private ownership in television ... difference of emphasis.

PM: I say I read the whole of the transcript because I was impelled to it by you. I mean you motivated me. I read the whole of the transcript and let me say in reading the whole of this transcript there was nothing which concerned me. And I didn't call the Senator to see me he said he'd like to come and have a yarn to me, he did. We had a year about a whole number of matters including his observations about that. So if you want to, I mean if you want as I say Glenn to try and stitch legs on to the corpse, do so. I mean that's what it's all about. But I can assure you my dear friend, I can assure you there ain't any life in that corpse. And if you keep trying to sew the legs on it will still remain lifeless.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister was that outburst against Bishop Hollingworth, was that theatrical, or was it fair dinkum?

PM: It was not theatrical and as distinct from some observers who've indicated that I lost my cool or say Hawkey's blowing his top, it was a most considered statement. I notice that some people suggest it might have been my speechwriter. It's not my speechwriter. It was Bob Hawke and a very considered statement. And I must say I've been very very pleased, generally speaking by the reaction. Just let me say, as you've raised it, let me make the record quite clear. I said what I said there, not on the issue of child poverty. If anyone wants to attack or attempt to attack this Government, or me personally on the question of our record on child poverty, I'll handle that anywhere, because we've got a better record than anyone else. But it was not what I was talking about. I was talking about an unjustified and unjustifiably blanket attack on all politicians in this country –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Well can I finish? And what I regarded as something that was dangerous. I believe it is dangerous, and particularly coming from sources like that and putting out to young people that all politicians in this country are people who won't do anything about an issue unless forced to, and particularly at election time. That to me is unacceptable and I felt it my duty to strongly, and as strongly as I could, repudiate that unfounded assertion. And may I say this, that in the subsequent discussion I had with the Archbishop, which I may say was not a case of me as some news television stations talked about me summoning the Bishop to my office. The facts are that the Archbishop had an appointment with me in my office, and that was kept. And in that discussion, a totally amicable discussion – got that ... – in that very amicable discussion the Archbishop accepted that point and said, certainly as I did, it was quite appropriate that I should have expressed myself. And just let me make this final point on it that the subsequent observation by the Archbishop that he wouldn't be silenced on the question of child poverty, of course, is an irrelevancy. Because if you read my speech I welcome the involvement of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in this area, congratulated them on their work and hope they continue to be involved. It was a quite separate issue. It's the issue of the protection of the integrity of politicians in this country across the spectrum. I think it's just very very dangerous if that sort of thing is allowed to go unanswered –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: And I wasn't prepared to let it go unanswered.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST: So it goes specifically your personal integrity.

PM: It – mine and all. I mean Warwick you can try and ignore what I say that I'm not talking about politicians as a whole, I'm only talking about myself. I'm talking about my own. I'm a politician. But my concern was not –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: My concern was not about myself. My concern was –

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Well look I'm not here to have a debate with you. I'm saying that my concern is I think it is very dangerous, and I'm very very glad to see that a number of commentators have taken the point. It's extraordinarily dangerous for this country, for it to be fed into the community and particularly into the minds of young people, that all politicians are crooks, because that's what it was. That no politician is really concerned about an issue. He will only do something about an issue if he's forced into it at election time. It's as repugnant as if I were to say that all journalists are crooks, particularly at election time. I mean -

JOURNALIST: They weren't saying ... were crooks.

PM: Oh, Michelle if you're saying that it is not a reflection that all politicians are crooks, to say that all politicians will only do something about an issue if forced into it, especially at election time -

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Well because that's dishonest as well. Because all politicians purport, and this is true of my opponents, as well as in my own party, they purport to have a real concern and a preparedness to do things. They say that. So if you are saying that that's not the case then you are saying they are dishonest. I mean that follows as a matter of simple and irrefutable logic -

JOURNALIST: (inaudible)

PM: Look OK. Michelle I do not, I don't want to get into an argument with you. I mean if you want to take the view that that proposition which says that all politicians will only do something if forced into it, especially at election time, is not a reflection of the honesty and integrity of politicians that's a view you are entitled to. I simply don't share it. I say that the expression of that view is dangerous in this society, because it is not true. It is not a true reflection of the commitment of politicians across the political spectrum, of politicians in the Liberal Party, of politicians in the National Party, of Democrats as well as people in my own Party. It is an inaccurate, and I believe, dishonest, unchristian reflection upon all politicians.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, just one thing in a broader spectrum on that. Hasn't the Opposition questioned the Government's motives on child poverty ... Haven't you and the Government questioned the Opposition's integrity for raising your ... issue. And didn't you question the Opposition's integrity for making the ...

PM: (inaudible)

ends