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## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH RON BELL, RADIO 2GF, GRAFTON  
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E & OE - PROOF ONLY

BELL: Good morning Mr Hawke.

PM: Thank you very much Ron. It's a great pleasure to be here with you.

BELL: They mentioned last night in the introductions and the outros etc that it's your first trip as Prime Minister. Have you been before?

PM: Yes, and I just passed the pub, walking here, where one night about ten years ago Hazel and I stayed overnight. We were on our way from, driving from Sydney up to Brisbane and we'd gone for ages without being able to find any room at an inn anywhere. We got here and went to the Post Office Hotel. I just bumped into the fellow in front of it. He remembered our visit. I remember with pleasure the magnificent breakfast we had there. But unfortunately it was a very brief visit.

BELL: You're game mentioning driving up the Pacific Highway.

PM: Well if you want to go the question of the Pacific Highway we've got, you know, quite a good story on that. I mean I recognise of course the tragedies that have occurred there but we have not been idle about that. There are, have been legitimate concerns about the highway. But as you'd know Ron, on the 14th of May my Minister, Bob Brown, the Minister for Land Transport and the NSW Minister for Transport announced a package of joint Commonwealth-NSW funding for the highway which will see around some \$300 million invested over the next three years, which is almost treble what had been spent over the previous three years. But we're not only doing that specific expenditure which will tackle the most cost effective measures to improve it, like extra overtaking lanes and widening and straightening dangerous curves, but in the wider sense we're also, in conjunction with the States, attacking the whole area of dangerous areas of roads. And even more broadly we're establishing the National Road Trauma Advisory Council so that we're going to try and bring in the best independent expert advise there is as to what are the sort of things, just in addition to the obvious expenditure on roads, that

governments round Australia ought to do to try and tackle this major problem.

BELL: Is a part of the problem we're a small country in people numbers and we're a big country in geographical ways?

PM: It's one of the problems Ron. Obviously you put your finger on it. We're 17 million people in the largest island continent in the world and for us therefore transportation is a particularly important determinant of both our standard of living and the quality of life. That's why, since we've been in government, we have significantly increased in real terms the amount of funding for roads. I suppose the Australian people will never feel that governments have spent as much as they'd like. But it's a question of trying to get your priorities right. One of the features of Australia when you're talking about the nature of the size of our country, one of the problems of course is the division of responsibilities between the Federal and State and Local governments. And that's why just recently I made that major speech in Canberra in which I'm going to be bringing the Premiers together in the Special Premiers' Conference at the end of October. This is not calculated to try and have any Party political advantage, but what I want to do is try and get the Premiers together and say look, let's just openly, directly and without prejudice examine the respective functions that we fulfil, Commonwealth and State, see where there are overlaps, whether there is a more effective and more efficient way of conducting our business. I must say Ron I'm very pleased with the very positive response I've received from the Premiers and I think Australians can look forward to their politicians and their governments now tackling this issue in a more effective way.

BELL: If we can go back to March 24, that Saturday night, did you prior to then think two fairly political lightweights from the North Coast would be so critical on that evening?

PM: Well let me say, I'll tell you honestly what had happened. On the Thursday night in Sydney I'd had some people into Kirribilli. We were doing a little bit of fundraising. Stephen Loosley said to me after they'd gone, we were just having a cup of tea together, he said we'll deliver you Page. I said really. He said yes, we'll deliver you Page. I said that's marvellous. And he said, I'll tell you one thing, he said, this will come as a surprise to you. He said keep your eye on Richmond. I said you're joking. He said no I'm not, you keep your eye on it. So you see that Loosley at least had a feeling that we could make it. I at that stage hadn't had the pleasure really of knowing Harry Woods - he's sitting here next to me as I talk to you - but I've obviously got to know him well since his election. It doesn't surprise me that he won because he's a great bloke and he obviously has got the qualities that I think the people in this electorate will find attractive. He will consolidate this seat. After this of course I'm going on to Richmond and we'll talk about that there. But

I'm here with Harry and I think you will find that this is going to be cemented as a Labor seat.

BELL: Just touching on the up and comers in the Party. In your Ministry we've had two recent visitors here to the electorate through the work of Harry - David Beddall and Robert Tickner - just this week. They're very impressive young men.

PM: Thanks Ron, yes they are. We're very fortunate in that regard. Even our political opponents have acknowledged that the quality of the Ministry I've been able to have around me since '83, but you go to ... at that point we've got a reservoir of young talent there and you certainly refer to two that come into that category.

BELL: Last night you referred a couple of times to using the words sustainable development. Some people either don't want to hear those words or refuse to accept them. How do we get them to accept that we have to have sustainable development in this country?

PM: Well I think it's a question of education, of reiteration of issues, but most importantly it's the creation of processes. That's what I've been about, in two ways Ron. Firstly I established the Resource Assessment Commission. That was before the election. Now that's a body headed up by Mr Justice Stewart. That's going to address major broad issues like forests, coastal development and the question of possible development in the southern part of Kakadu Park. Now under that process it will mean that those who want to see development, those who want to put environmental arguments are going to have this totally independent national body that they can go to, put their arguments and their case, then that Resource Assessment will then make recommendations to the Government. I think that must give confidence to the community and to particular interest groups that they are going to have a full and unfettered right to put their case and that decisions are going to be made on the basis of independent advice. So that's one part. The second process is, you talk about sustainable development, I've now with my colleagues set up groups in various sectors of industry, without being exhaustive, covering manufacturing, covering tourism, covering agriculture, covering forests. On those committees that we'll be establishing the actual development people will be represented, the environmental people will be represented, the trade union movement will be represented. And in that way we will translate from the rhetoric of sustainable development into a process which will enable people to be heard and I think confidence to be engendered into the decision-making process. I think that's the way you've got to do it.

BELL: No doubt Harry Woods has brought your attention to a problem that could be coming up here with a forest to the west of Grafton, the Billilimbra State Forest and the logging of that, or proposed logging of part of it. That,

as has been detailed there in the paper that you're looking at, if the forest is locked up it's going to be a disaster for this area. Can Harry, through you, seek your ... into that?

PM: Yes sure. You'll appreciate that in the area we're talking about here, this is a State Government area of responsibility. I'm not saying that to try and dodge your question. But it does go back to a thing that I was talking about before, about the division of responsibility in this country between State Governments and the Federal Government. Now what we try and do in the Federal Government is to say where there are areas of State responsibility we ask them and we expect them to carry it out with due regard for the sorts of considerations that I've been talking about - growth considerations and environmental considerations. But to the extent that there is any relevance for us in our area of responsibility, I know that Harry will make representations to our appropriate Ministers if there is a role for Federal Government. But you see we've got this, you know, just part of this broader problem that we've got. You can't have the argument sensibly conducted by saying it is for Australia either development or the environment. You've just got to get the balance. It's just inevitable in that situation Ron that on some occasions one interest or other is going to say you're wrong.

BELL: Some of the radicals on either side say we can't accept -

PM: And that's the importance of processes that I was talking about before. If they see that you're dinkum about creating the opportunity for a fair hearing and independent assessment I think that's the most they can ask.

BELL: I don't want to get bogged down in the Middle East thing, I don't know enough about it. I just want to ask you a question. Obviously when you made the decision to send the Australian naval ships there you would have expected some criticism. How do you convince those people what you have done is for the long term benefit of this country?

BELL: Again by exposition. I of course will be making a statement in the Parliament but if I could just share briefly my thoughts with you. I've said, it's a paradox, I've said it's the most serious decision I've made as Prime Minister, but in the end it was also an easy decision because the principles and the issues are quite clear. And that is that if you read the history of the 20th Century there is one thing that stands out with dramatic clarity in that dreadful dismal decade of the 30s. That the world was subjected to the horror of the Second World War through a combination of two things. It was not only the villainy of Naziism and those associated axis forces - that was an important precondition of the dastardly things that happened in the 30s. But the other precondition, without which it wouldn't have happened, was the appeasement of those with

the power to stop evil. I've just recently read a massive two volume biography of Winston Churchill by William Manchester and what burned clearly into my mind was that at the end of the Second World War there shouldn't have been one Nuremberg trial, there should have been two. One for the Nazis and one for the appeasers. Because it took the both of them to produce the tragedy of the Second World War. In other words, if the world community wants to have respected the principle of the independence of sovereign nations and the rejection of the right of naked aggression to acquire and annex neighbouring countries, then the world has to be prepared to give effect to its principles.

BELL: One of the critics has been the Iraqi Ambassador, and my apologies for not recalling his name, but am I being pedantic if I suggest that he should be asked to go home?

PM: Not being pedantic but it's a wrong suggestion, with respect Ron. Because you must recognise that one of the deep concerns that I had in my mind in coming to this decision was the position of Australians in Iraq. We have the position there where we are diplomatically represented and well represented and our Ambassador there and our staff are constantly making representations to the Iraqi government about the welfare and safety of our citizens. It wouldn't be conducive to our capacity to keep doing that if we were to say off you go.

BELL: It was rumoured last night, and what letter they were referring to I don't know, but they were saying you had a letter from Hussein, whether that's the President or the King, I'm not sure.

PM: No, from the Emir of Kuwait.

BELL: Right, so everybody had it wrong then -

PM: I don't -

BELL: ... last night, yes it was just a rumour.

PM: The letter that I've had, I mean I don't know whether there's some reference to another one that I haven't seen that's just come in in the last few hours or something. But the letter I had was from the Emir of Kuwait asking us for assistance under Section 51 of the United Nations Charter. That section of the United Nations Charter gives the right of collective security at the request of a member nation who is being subjected to aggression. My advice from the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and my own reading of the situation assures me that that gives us - the Section 51 together with the request that we've had from the Emir of Kuwait - gives us legal sanction for what we're doing.

BELL: The subject came up somewhere along the line, last night I think when you were referring to the Budget, and

there are hard times ahead next week. Can we recover that title of the lucky country in Australia?

PM: I hope we never again get that title. That might sound a funny thing to say, but in many senses the title of the lucky country was not good for us. What do I mean by that? I mean this. There was reason, there was reason for the title lucky country because compared to so many other countries we were and are extraordinarily fortunate. The characteristics of that good fortune are these. I mean we are a united country. We have enormous resources, natural resources. We have a great people. We have a commitment to the processes of parliamentary democracy. We're close to the fastest-growing region of the world. I mean facts which in a sense entitle you to describe yourself as lucky. But unfortunately it also reflected the fact that it all came too easy. If you look in the post-war period you had a world devastated by the destruction of the Second World War and the world was crying out for the things that we so easily produced, our food. We got record prices and that enabled us to have the economic capacity to have a massive immigration program which enlarged and enriched our country. We did it in those circumstances behind tariff walls which enabled us to build up manufacturing industry. It was all too easy. When the world prices for our grains and our meat and our wool, when they tumbled down we then got into our vast mineral expansion and the world wanted all those things. It all came easy. It was lucky. And that engendered, I think, too many assumptions on the part of us all - of employers, trade unions, politicians - that it was there for the taking. The fruit was on the tree - grab it. But you didn't really have to think about how you grew the trees, how you created competitive industries. Now the world has long since lost any idea that it owes Australia a living, if it ever had that idea. We've got to understand that we've got to work hard for it.

BELL: Just a couple of quickies. As Prime Minister you get to go to a lot of places. Do you get to see many of those places? Like you're in Grafton, are you disappointed you can't spend a day or two here to have a look ...

PM: Yes. It looks to me lovely. May I say to the citizens of Grafton and the region, your weather beats the hell out of Canberra at the moment. But I had the invitation last night for instance to come back next year for your July race meeting, special meeting, and I'm certainly going to try and do that. I'd like to do that.

BELL: And you're a punter, a betting man. Who will be the next Prime Minister?

PM: Well it will be a Labor bloke.

BELL: Mr Beazley or Mr Keating?

PM: Look, I've said that Paul Keating is the fellow who I think has got the - I don't say I think - who I know has got

the experience and the commitment. I would imagine, I would think that that would be, whenever the time comes that I give it away, I would believe that he would be the choice of the Party. Paul understands, I understand, that that's a matter for the Caucus. But that's what I think the decision would be.

BELL: When we see you on television, when they do close-ups of you it comes in on the face, I've often been fascinated by the lapel badge. What is that? I often thought it was a Rotary badge.

PM: No, it's something of which I'm very very proud. I received that in 1979, the last full year in which I was President of the ACTU. It's the Order of Australia at the category of Companion. It's the Companion Order which is the highest level of the Order of Australia other than the Knighthood, and we don't believe in those as you know. That was awarded to me in the period of the Fraser government. Not by the government because the committee which makes these decisions is at arms length from government. They decided that what I'd done in Australia and the Labor movement and beyond was something that warranted that and I'm very proud of it. So I wear it regularly.

BELL: Do you have a number of them, because surely you'd be changing suits every five minutes almost wouldn't you?

PM: I've got a spare.

BELL: You've got a spare. Mr Prime Minister, thank you for joining us and I hope you enjoy your trip to the north coast. We'd like to see you back here again.

PM: Thank you very much Ron. I've enjoyed it very much.

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