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PRIME MINISTER

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JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what do you hope to get out of the population study?

PM: Information. In this whole area of immigration and the pattern of our population growth there are a lot of prejudices. There's a lot of lack of knowledge. What we are about is to try and get the best information we can about what are the consequences of population growth and what are the sorts of considerations that governments should properly therefore be planning for, and thinking about, to take account of the impact of population growth. Now, for any area of policy making, the essential prerequisite is to have as much information as possible. That's one part of it. That is getting a basis for good policy making. The other, of course, is to have the basis for having an informed community because an informed, knowledgeable community is going to be a more sensible community.

JOURNALIST: Are you not convinced then of the benefits of immigration growth, population growth?

PM: You only had to listen to my speech and I hope you were there. I've made that quite clear.

JOURNALIST: In your opinion, Prime Minister, what is the cause of prejudice in Australia today regarding immigration?

PM: I think if you're looking at any community, whether it's Australia or elsewhere, if you ask that question, what is the cause of prejudice, you're asking one of the most difficult questions about human nature. Causes of prejudice will be different for different people. For some it will be fear. Perhaps an apprehension that more immigration is going to mean more competition for jobs and perhaps less security of employment. For others it may be considerations based on ignorance about the habits and customs of people. They just may feel that people are going to behave in a way which is going to upset them. A whole range of considerations that go to make up the patterns of prejudice in any society. I think to a very large extent the common elements in prejudice in any

community are ignorance and fear. That's why the sorts of things that we're about - that I was talking about tonight and work that you asked about in the previous question of this National Population Council - is to try and disseminate information. A more enlightened, a more informed community is going to be a less prejudiced community.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke you referred to the Business Migration Program in your speech today and earlier the Opposition spokesman on immigration has criticised the administration of that program saying it's basically at risk because of maladministration and fraud, widespread fraud. How do you respond to that claim?

PM: Well we have acknowledged in the past that there have been some shortcomings. As I said in the speech, this evening, changes have been made in the administration of the program. We concede because we're honest in the way we approach the whole question of government. There have been some shortcomings and we've moved to rectify them. But overall the concept and the practice of the Business Migration Program has been of considerable benefit to this country.

JOURNALIST: Mr Ruddock also says that the Australian immigration program is selecting the lowest common denominator because better migrants are opting for Canada and the USA because the economies in those two countries are much better.

PM: Well Mr Ruddock doesn't know what he's talking about. It's a tragedy that this policy-less Opposition - and they are indeed policy-less - as we've been demonstrating day after day in the Parliament. They haven't got one constructive idea. ... seem to just go on day after day trying to knock their country. If he wants to say that Canada is a better place to go to, then let him say and he'll be judged by his fellow Australians for the sort of mindless, prejudice, policy-less sort of representative of an Opposition that he is.

JOURNALIST: What do you say to his rejections, then, that it's going to be considerably lower over the next few years given that there'll be tighter migration regulations?

PM: Mr Ruddock and the Opposition wouldn't know what they are talking about on this or virtually any other issue. When we've seen this in the Parliament today. Just let - an example today, you had the Leader of the Opposition being responsible for putting out a press release which is acknowledged by his own Party - I mean, they were appalled in the Parliament today, at the total misrepresentation that they go on with. Now when you have a situation where the Liberal and Country members of the Parliament are sitting there blanching in the Parliament when their misrepresentations of their leaders

are exposed, I mean, what weight, what gravamen is there. They are people totally lacking in substance. To me this is a pity. I don't take any pleasure in it. I'd be a much happier Prime Minister if these people would come up with policies of substance. Come up with considered propositions, should say, here this is the way we think things ought to be done. But as was pointed out in the Parliament today, for instance, in this whole area of how to run the economy they say, well we say that there should be a considerable reduction in public expenditures. And what do they do? They then go into the Parliament and knock off 25 million savings in outlays that we're talking about in the area of assets tests. I mean, they really are fast developing into the most pathetic Opposition this country has seen. It's Leader is fast achieving the impossible. He's starting to make Andrew Peacock and John Howard look like men of substance and by God is that an achievement.

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