



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP, BANKSTOWN COLLEGE OF TAFE, MARCH 2 1992

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J: Mr Keating, ACOSS has described part of your tax/economic statement as unfair and dangerous. Does that concern you?

PM: Well I didn't hear ACOSS barracking for the low paid. When I became the Treasurer the low paid were on a tax rate of 30 per cent, we cut them to 20 per cent over those eight years, introduced the Family Allowance Supplement which never came from ACOSS. There are bigger constituencies than ACOSS worrying about the low paid. In the main the organisation which has most represented the low paid in this country is the ACTU, which it still does well and with great concern.

J: Will you ignore ACOSS?

PM: No, ACOSS is entitled to its view but it's only a view. But this area is the area I am interested in - technical and further education. And it's good to be back at this school, I actually went to school here. This is the area of education, beyond school, closest to the community and it's the area which the Commonwealth is going to take over, it's the area which we are going to make again a strong part of the education system by Commonwealth funding. All of the courses which we saw here today, literacy, computers, computer literacy, fitting and turning, carpentry, all of those things are things which are important to the community, important for basic jobs skills, important for getting a chance to work and making Australia a more capable country. And my colleague John Hewson says, it's not affordable, we shouldn't be doing this. This building right behind, you the Commonwealth has just completed, \$14 million. We will be doing more TAFE technical and further education capital and recurrent spending as a result of the One Nation package.

J: But are you spending enough money on TAFE?

PM: Well, we are going to spend more than has ever been spent. That is we are going to lift it up as we lifted universities up. But Dr Hewson says that it's unfunded and unaffordable, so he wouldn't be spending any money on TAFE. He says it was irresponsible and extravagant to spend money on the TAFE system, to spend money on Australian kids and adults who want to lift their skills, give themselves opportunities in the workforce and make Australia a more capable country, not just a more clever country, but a more capable country. And it is in places like this that people have got to know what Dr Hewson's sterile policies are about. It's not about helping these people. His education policy if your parents can afford \$13,000 you can go to a private university, but if they can't afford that and you can't get into university well you are on your own. There is no TAFE college for you, there's no computer course, there's no literacy, there's none of these other 1200 courses which are available in TAFE which help people find their way into the workforce and make Australia better.

J: Is you coming here today part of your remodelling your image?

PM: It's not a matter of remodelling my image. I've been coming here since I was a kid. I went to school here. You have got to get better questions son, you've got to chop those silly things out. The thing is, it's only the Labor Party that's ever been interested in these things, in trying to bring people up who don't have a lot of opportunities, to give them something extra and valuable. And that's what TAFE's about.

J: Mr Keating, how do you feel about Britain's response to your republican push and your war history?

PM: I wasn't talking about republicanism. My views on all this are well known.

J: Mr Keating, are you happy with the way the Statement has been received so far?

PM: Exceptionally well received by the business community, exceptionally well received, I think, by the community in general. Because it is a plan for Australia, it's a plan for the next four years, it's about rebuilding the basic infrastructure, the rail system, the electricity system, giving Australia a different airline system, a competitive airline policy, letting industries like tourism flourish, about rebuilding the TAFE sector to give students, children and adults alike, a better opportunity in life. It's about all those basic things that are not going to be done by taxing your Weet-Bix. I mean the GST on your Kellogs is not going to build that TAFE college, it's not going to rebuild the

Brisbane-Sydney-Melbourne-Adelaide-Perth railway line, it's not going to change the ports, it's not going to change the way in which the airline system works. You can't get that sort of vision and change from a sterile policy which taxes your Weet-Bix and your shirts.

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