



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP ADELAIDE, MARCH 6 1992**

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- J: Sir, if I may ask a question of a cricket nature, Ian Botham has come out today and said that your comments last week spurred him and England on to greater things. You have taken the wrap for the recession over the past months, will you now take it for the cricket?
- PM: Oh well, we have got four games to go, I think, let's wait and see what happens.
- J: Well, Australians can stand perhaps a recession, but they really can't stand losing the cricket.
- PM: Well in that case tell that to our crew.
- J: What about Mr Botham, what about his comments?
- PM: Well if it spurred him on to greater heights, it's good for sport, good for cricket.
- J: Mr Keating, were you further annunciating your republican remarks within that speech?
- PM: Well I have never made republican remarks so-called, I was just talking about Australia's independence and its cultural identity, and the fact that Australians should be whole-hearted Australians, and not half-hearted Australians.
- J: Have they been that in the past, under the previous Prime Minister perhaps?
- PM: Certainly under conservative Prime Ministers, and I think that this is all part of Australia's continuing transition.

- J: But there is a difference in your sort of Australianess, and Bob Hawke's sort of Australianess, isn't there?
- PM: Well I don't know, that is for you to make a judgement about. The ABC keeps a sharp eye on all these things, I know.
- J: Is Dr Hewson off the pace of the republican debate, Prime Minister?
- PM: Well, the republican debate is very hard to pin down isn't it, don't you think so?
- J: How long do you think it will be before it will happen?
- PM: I don't know, but I think we will probably see that happen in Australia, but I am not sure when.
- J: Will you be maintaining the pressure on the general debate Prime Minister?
- PM: Well I am not putting any pressure on the debate, I just sort of made a few simple points about Australia's independence from Europe, the fact that we are now a country trading our way in the Asia Pacific, and Dr Hewson had pains to point out. I didn't have enough respect. And I said well maybe not for you, but for Australia I have.
- J: Do you like the flag Prime Minister, or would you like to see it changed?
- PM: Well I do think it is a curiosity to have the Union Jack in the corner, I mean it is a bit of a corner.
- J: Should it be in the middle?
- PM: Well the question is, should it be there at all?
- J: Do you think we should take it off?
- PM: Well that's again another debate. It is no doubt, I am sure, that plenty of people in our neighborhood wonder about us, whether we are as we describe ourselves as being, a nation, while there is so much ambiguity about our flag.
- J: How are we all together different? You are quoted in the Guardian this week as saying Australians are all together different. How are we all together different?
- PM: Well we are all together different in knowing, I think, what we feel about the place, and different certainly to Europe.
- J: But how does an Australian be more Australian? What are you saying about that?

- PM: Well for a start, not tugging the forelock to the British establishment, that's a place for starters. The Liberal Party are yet to learn about this, well most of them.
- J: What's the essence of being Australian today?
- PM: Being proud of the country, proud of our achievements, wanting to see it be independent and successful, and identifying with its independence and success, and not hankering for something else.
- J: What is going to be done about the Aboriginal questions you mentioned in your speech?
- PM: Well the Government is going to be attending to that in the Aboriginal Deaths and Custody recommendation to the Royal Commission, and which is one of the longest running Royal Commission, probably ever. It is a very serious set of recommendations which we are going to respond to seriously.
- J: Have you given some assurance to the Premier of Western Australia, Carmel Lawrence, that you will be looking at perhaps modifying the fringe benefits tax in the Budget?
- PM: No, I don't know why have you ...
- J: There has been a report today along those lines.
- PM: Well no I haven't.
- J: What's your reaction to certain businessmen asking for a lower dollar thinking that will fix their ills?
- PM: Well you know, the Australian Foreign Exchange Market is very deep, we turn over \$40 billion a day, and if they wish to make plaintive pleas about the rate, they should make it loud and with feeling to the market, and maybe someone will listen and take notice.
- J: Mr Keating, what are your views on Bill Hayden being Australia's first President?
- PM: Well you should ask him that, I am not sure he has volunteered for that role yet.
- J: Mr Keating, on a lighter note, Domingo is in town at the moment and he wants to catch up with you, will you have time?
- PM: Well I am around but the thing is, I have got things to do too.

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