



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
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J: Prime Minister, could we get your response to the ANZ bank forecasts, no signs of a recovery for the economy?

PM: It's a job vacancies series, it goes up and down a bit but it's been running the right way for quite a while so I wouldn't be focusing too much on that. Signs of recovery are ambiguous, that's why the Government did introduce the Statement it did to try and accelerate the recovery. And, of course, it will take some time for that to have effect. The first payments are not made until April, so it's going to take a while to have an affect.

J: What about banks suggestion ... another cut in interest rates?

PM: I'm not sure. Banks are sellers of money, they're always suggesting lower interest rates.

J: So you're not considering that at all?

PM: No.

J: Are you confident figures due out later this week might be a bit more optimistic?

PM: I think we are seeing, as I said, ambiguous signs. Some signs seemed as though recovery is underway, others don't. The popular interpretation is that we're at the bottom of the trough, that may well be true.

J: The job advertisements are a pretty good indicator, and they're showing a drop ...

PM: Yes, but they have been showing a rise for a few months now, so there may be some correction to the statistics.

J: This drop puts it back to the amount it was in November, so really you haven't made any progress at all.

PM: Again, I think it is patchy, it is very hard to tell.

J: The report this morning says that during the last 12 months the number of jobs has dropped.

PM: Employment has risen, it's the job vacancies. Employment has risen in the period, but so too has unemployment and the job vacancies were showing signs of improvement over a period of time. But apparently in this month they have dropped again. What does that mean? It is very hard to say what it means.

J: What do you think the figure will be later today?

PM: I don't know, let's wait and see.

J: Do you have any comment to make on the distribution of that speech you made in 1970?

PM: No, it's only the Liberal Party doing what it normally does. In the 1970s they were still arguing for capital punishment and militant about the fact that God Save the Queen should still be the national anthem. They were then raving reactionaries and a lot of them still are now.

J: Your attitudes have changed a lot since then, obviously?

PM: I worked out that, in the period, women deserved a greater go and I tried to give it to them in the 80s and I catalogued that today in the speech. I think this is yet to dawn on the Liberal Party.

J: Mr Keating, you admitted that you're not widely regarded as a feminist. Have you got a lot of work to do until the next election?

PM: As I went through some of the things I had done when in the 1980s I tried to do everything I could to give women an opportunity, mainly with employment. With things like access to superannuation, which they were formerly not given, they had no preserved benefits, with a child maintenance agency so that husbands who had responsibilities to them, faced them, the Family Allowance Supplement to low paid families, mostly of course supporting women. But one of the greatest burdens that we'll see on women in the future, were it ever to come to pass, would be the goods and services tax. I can think of no other issue which will put such a burden on women as the GST and that whole problem about income exchange within families, about transfers within families would have to be part and parcel of a 15 per cent impost on food and clothing and all the

things that women are, in the main, responsible for in the family.

J: Prime Minister on another matter, do you intend to reignite the Special Premiers Conference agenda?

PM: I'm not here to go around the world for sport. That's an issue, but the Premiers will be speaking to us about the Premiers Conference round. Some are supporting the reconvening on issues that were formerly part of the Special Premiers Conference agenda. Many of them of course have been adopted and I have, in the One Nation Statement, moved that debate along with some of the issues which were on the agenda. So I have got an open mind about it.

J: Do you see a need for another Special Premiers Conference?

PM: I think Australia has to be run co-operatively and it means I think, therefore, that the Commonwealth and the States have got to work together. What the processes are in that working together is a moot point, but the most important thing is that we should be working together and will be working together.

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