



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
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J: What are your chances of winning the Wills by-election?

PM: Well it's going to be a difficult election for us, we don't underestimate our difficulties, but we will be in there trying.

J: Do you think the Opposition's letters to the electorate of late are going to swing that ...?

PM: I think the debate in the last few weeks has shown the difference between the Government and the Opposition. The Opposition is pretty sterile, it doesn't want to do anything about an Australian recovery, it only wants to tax your WeetBix, and your Kelloggs, and your clothes at 15 per cent. I think everyone has got that message. When the Opposition have their way, the great burden of the GST will fall on Australian women, in the management of their households, and it will fall on the business people of this country, the small business people of this country, who will no longer have a Sunday afternoon off, they will spend Sunday afternoon calculating the GST and remitting the proceeds to the tax office. This is a small business community we are in, a shopping street, all these people will be tax collectors, all will have to spend their Sundays collating and reconciling the GST papers and the collections. That's the new world Dr Hewson has available to them. On the other hand, the Labor Party is trying to run Australia cooperatively, bring Australians together, induce a recovery, have the Government not sitting on the sidelines, actually doing things to lift recovery and employment, and to make society better and more efficient on the way through.

J: Do you think it helps our relations with Indonesia to have confidential documents and conversations from the Department of Foreign Affairs being leaked?

- PM: Well these are old conversations are they not, as I understand, 1988 conversations. And this debate was on back then and I think the Indonesian Government understands that.
- J: But is it fair, do you agree that the Soeharto family is constraining the growth in the Indonesian economy?
- PM: I wouldn't endorse those conclusions, no.
- J: Do you agree with the protest of Lusitania Expresso going to Deli at the moment?
- PM: We have given appropriate warnings to the dangers of people involved in going on that vessel and I can only repeat those warnings.
- J: Do you agree with their right to protest?
- PM: Well, people have got to weigh their right to protest against the consequences of them doing it, and I am not sure that anything that they may be involved with can materially alter what has happened, or the response by Indonesia.
- J: Prime Minister, given yours and the Governments good form, are you thinking of an early election?
- PM: Well, I answered that the other day. No, the people of Australia are entitled to get value from this Parliament, it's got 15 months to run, and that's why we take the view that people are entitled to representation and that's why we've brought an election on, on the 11th of April, so that the electors of Wills can quickly have a representative in the Parliament. We believe that people should be represented, and that therefore that in this electorate, the electors here have the opportunity to send Bill Kardamitsis to Canberra.
- J: Is that a commitment then to not hold a general election until after this time next year?
- PM: No, they are not commitments. It's just simply that the Parliament has got a long way to run and it's our intention to see it run on.
- J: But no general election before the end of this year?
- PM: I'm not into the commitments business, that's absurd.
- J: On the question of the Indonesian protest, do you believe that that leak from the Foreign Affairs Department plus this protest is going to sour relations with Indonesia?
- PM: I don't know, you should ask them.

- J: Mr Keating, is the campaign here going to be all local issues as Mr Kardamitsis said or will it be a test of One Nation and Fightback?
- PM: I think it's a combination of local issues, the fact that we've got a candidate who is part of the community, who stands for Labor values as well as the fact that it has been an area represented by Labor very ably by our former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, as well as some discernment on the part of the electorate about the policies of the Partys. That is, between what the Government stands for and what Dr Hewson stands for, and I think that's the important thing. The important thing for us is to have our candidate elected to the seat of Wills and to get back on governing Australia. It is the most important job at the moment - government, getting a recovery going, making certain that all the One Nation Statement's elements are adopted and put into place, that we see that impact on the economy and we get down to the job of governing and not be too distracted by the business of politics.
- J: ... governing Australia, your Aboriginal Affairs Minister wants to spend several hundred million dollars in the wake of the black deaths inquiry. How hard to you think it's going to be to get the States to keep up their side of the bargain on this question?
- PM: Cabinet is considering this matter soon and I think it's best to talk about that after its consideration.
- J: Do you expect the States to be fulsome in their response to the inquiry too? There have been difficulties there in the past with Aborigines.
- PM: I think it has been a very long running Royal Commission and I think all the parties have taken its recommendation seriously so I will be surprised if the States don't respond seriously and well.
- J: Prime Minister, last week you said that Wills should be a shoo-in for the Liberals, have you changed your mind in the last few days?
- PM: The fact is that the Liberal Party has got a very large lead in the polls. To deny that is to deny the undeniable. But as Bill said, we are going to be in there trying, we'll be doing our best and I hope we can win.

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