



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
INTERVIEW WITH GERALDINE DOOGUE, ABC RADIO, 16 JUNE 1992

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GD: Good morning and welcome to 'Life Matters'. This morning my special guest is the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, a man about whom many people apparently have fixed opinions. He's hardly cut a bland image over the years he's been having a relationship with the Australian public. And if opinion polls are any guide Mr Keating does still have an image problem in that he continues to record high disapproval ratings and his transition from Treasurer to Prime Minister doesn't appear to have significantly altered people's perceptions. Mind you, 30 per cent of people polled in The Australian newspaper's Newspann that was just published this morning said they were undecided between Mr Keating and Dr John Hewson, and that was the highest ever recording. Though the state of the parties put Labor a full ten points behind, just pretty well stable. Now these polls are an effort, of course, and effort only to guess the public mood at any one time so they are not definitive, but several of them do show he has a particular problem with female voters. Last month he brought out veteran feminist and bureaucrat Anne Summers from the United States to help him turn that around. There would be a very definite view of course, for any man who presides over an unemployment rate of 10.6 has a real problem with voters not one of perception. But Mr Keating must persuade people that whatever they think of him, the alternative is worse. And the dilemma for him is how to go on the attack to present that issue as well as present a subtly different image to the sorts of voters, many of them women but not all of them, or are a little less fascinated by the game of politics and moved more by impressions of people's biases and predilections.

So with all that in mind, I spoke to Mr Keating yesterday afternoon when he was visiting Melbourne to speak to the Institute of Directors. So Mr Keating, welcome to 'Life Matters'.

- PM: Thank you Gerry, it is lovely to be here.
- GD: What do you think of the way President Bush and Dan Quale used the word family in their campaigning strategies? They talk about a return to family values and they talk about the break down, the moral order, do you think that appeals to the Australian voter?
- PM: No, because I think the notion of family is different now to what it was. There are all sorts of families and public policy has got to comprehend that. We sought to do that in the 1980s, to support all kinds of families. A couple of years ago John Howard had a set of ads where he had the cottage and the white picket fence and that's the sort of 1950s view of the Australian family. Well, John is a '50s person, he would want to take us back there, but life has moved on. I don't like double speak in politics. I think if any government wants to claim an interest in families the policies have got to fit the bill. That is, don't tell us what you think, tell us what you're going to do.
- GD: But you say John Howard is a man of the past, but in many ways you and he share the fact that your families are part of the 23 per cent who live in that traditional style that used to operate when the white picket fence was more the norm, in that you've got the man going out to work, the woman staying at home and the kids at home. So you are not that different in that sense at all.
- PM: Except that I don't want to squeeze every other family into the model. That is I except the view that we're looking at a family structure which is greatly different to that.
- GD: Do you regret that?
- PM: Not at all. That's why I think that government policy should be basically supporting families regardless of their character.
- GD: I mean I notice that you often describe us as a nation in transition, but usually you refer to the public face of Australia and its financial community, its trade and so on, there is very little reference to its private face. What do you think about the changes that have occurred between women and men in households, and between parents and their children? Do you like the general thrust or do you have real reservations?
- PM: I like the thrust. Can I say from the 1980s, the vast employment growth we had in the 1980s most of it went to women. I regard that as an unambiguously

good thing that women were given a choice - could do things, had more fulfilling lives - I don't lament that at all. I think that's part of the social change which we are seeing and should see. That is, that women are not squeezed into a particular mould.

GD: But a lot of people say that, it rolls of the tongue, it's the thing to say these days, but you haven't had as a man to go through the transition in your own household of having two people working.

PM: No, but the difference is though that I went through the policy consequences of it, I didn't resist it like John Howard did. For instance, I was the Treasurer that provided for a five-fold growth in child care places, I was the Treasurer that had to fund and help design the Family Allowance Supplement. Whatever my own experience was I took the view that there are other sorts of families and that the women in those families want to do other things and I've sought to have public policy accommodate that change.

GD: Why then are you perceived as having a problem with women?

PM: I don't think I do. Can I just say, in the portfolio I had as Treasurer in the 1980s, I had many things to do with women's policy, but it was invariably under another portfolio heading and so these things were always announced by their Ministers. But some of the things I was involved with were, for instance, the child support agency. Now we could never have established one of those without using the Australian Taxation Office. There was no agency of the Commonwealth that could actually go and set that system up and make it operate. I made that thing operate. Superannuation - before we moved into superannuation policy women just couldn't get preservation of superannuation. They'd hop into the workforce at 17, maybe disappear in their middle twenties to have a family, come back in, and have no preserved benefits for them. I introduced all those in legislation - the supplementary payments for low paid workers, mostly women, shop assistants, process workers, again women.

Bill Kelty and I worked that into Accords Mark V and VI. These are things which haven't sort of hit the light of day. I notice Carmel Niland said the other day in a piece in the Sydney Morning Herald that I'm just discovering social equity for women. Well the truth is Carmel hasn't yet discovered me. I've been through these issues before properly Carmen was beating a drum about them. That is, the Child Support Agency, supplementary payments, superannuation, massive increase in funding for

childcare, the Family Allowance Supplement and all the other things like how I supported Susan Ryan in discrimination policies, positive discrimination in favour of women. Yet these were all sort of Cabinet room things I did. The things which are exclusively mine were superannuation, supplementary payments, the Child Support Agency, although I did that with Brian Howe, but without the Tax Office it wouldn't have happened.

GD: Yes, but I suppose you could say you've also presided over a recession in which now 680,000 children have neither parent working at home. And you yourself say that the most important policies you can do for women is to get the economy going properly, you've said that all through the 1980s so that they can be the beneficiaries of it. So that has also occurred and maybe it is a stylistic thing, maybe your style is more playing the game of politics with a perception of the predator and the ruthlessness which women just distrust fundamentally.

PM: I think they ought to look at what we do as well as what we say. You mentioned about the jobs - in the 1980s we went from a work force of six million to seven and a half million, a 25 per cent increase. That slowed down of course in the recession, it stopped in the recession. But about 65 per cent of those jobs went to women.

GD: But was that the plan?

PM: The plan was a positive discrimination in favour of employment. Employment wasn't residual, it dropped down in numbers and we went after employment. The whole Accord process of agreed income determination was to devote the proceeds of that restraint to growth and we had very low participation rates amongst women and that rose quite sharply. Can I say also on education, we've taken participation rates in schools from 3 in 10 in 1983 to now nearly 8 in 10 and lifted university places by 50 per cent. The great part of that has gone to women, to girls, and I don't know of any better way of giving women in the economy a change to participate than through education.

GD: But then there's a collorary to that which is child care, which is the other major thing that does preoccupy women. If you're going to have more and more women not taking full responsibility in those early years someone's going to have to do that. Will it be the State in your view?

PM: We have taken, I think I said to you earlier, child care places from 50,000 to 250,000 by 1995 and no doubt when we get there we will continue on. That

has made a major contribution to participation for women by women, to have that facility, to have the support. And now there is work place child care, which again we pioneered, and now having companies involved. The tax office, can I say as a Commonwealth agency under me, the first place where the Commonwealth agreed to have child support at work was the Tax Office. Trevor Boucher and I agreed we'd do it. That is, the first Commonwealth agency that had child care support at work. This is also now true of the private economy and private business.

GD: I suppose it is a question of degree. At the inner city child care centre in the building in which I work in Sydney, there is an 18 month waiting list for children under the age of two and they told me that that's true basically of all inner city child care centres. That's a lot of people whose lives are being affected because they can't get child care places. Maybe we've just got to think on an altogether difference scale about childcare. Do you think that?

PM: I think the cost of running a full day care centre is such that you can't build it at a speed beyond which we've gone. But in shared costs, in work place accommodation and in other child care services particularly at home, that is beyond the long day care centre, that gives us a chance of opening the system up at a more marginal cost. I think it will be a combination of the two.

GD: And are you talking about a blend of private and public?

PM: Largely I think yes.

GD: Right.

PM: But that's not to say that the core program which is being for the long day care centres, we don't regard as anything other than the core.

GD: This is the fee relief system?

PM: The fee relief system for the low paid. Can I just say these are all the things John Hewson would put the cleaners through, he makes that abundantly clear. And so again, just going back to your point, don't judge him by the mild-mannered doorstep, judge him by what he says he'll do and what we've done. I think that's the point.

GD: I wonder, I'll come back to that in a moment, I wonder whether just as all Australian parents expect the government, as a basic provision, to provide primary school education, can you see a time when

the government also expects to provide pre-school child care, just an item of consolidated revenue?

PM: I think universally - no, because of its size and vast cost, but in principle, yes - because we've already crossed that rubicon. We crossed that rubicon by providing the various categories of child care and by carrying the cost of private provision for child care. So it will happen, but again like all other social change and reform it will take time.

GD: How long do you imagine? I mean what sort of process do you think we're presiding over as a country, this transition to a quite new way in which we take responsibility for children, the way in which we order our households, the way in which we all work?

PM: I think that's going to change. I think we're going to see people trained and re-trained and shifting the style of their work, the retiring age in reality has probably come down as people have in fact, not retired, but taken on other forms of work. The workforce is changing and patterns of work are changing and this is also true with women. I think that child care has become part of the expectation of mobility for Australia women and this government has done its best to make as many places available in the various forms.

GD: A lot of the market research that's done by good market researchers say that underneath it all, men in particular, are very concerned about this. Again they know that the trends are there, but underneath it all are anxious and they are resentful about these changes. They sort of say I don't know whether I ever joined the debate, it's happening despite me. Can you honestly say you're not like that?

PM: Resentful about what?

GD: Resentful of the fact that the households they thought they'd inherit are not there to inherit. That their children are looked after by others other than their immediate family, that their wives are going out, they maybe have to cook the meal at night and do the ironing.

PM: I'm certainly not resentful about it.

GD: Do you ever do the ironing?

PM: No, I don't do the ironing very often.

GD: Do you do the cooking?

PM: No, I don't do that much either. I'll be honest with you I haven't, but I've done my bit when I think it has mattered. But again, I wouldn't take the view that one should be resentful. The barriers to women's participation in the workforce have been quite profound and where-ever I can give the system a nudge to help open it up I have. Whether it's in the Commonwealth area or in the Treasury itself or where-ever its been I've tried to give them a break that the system is sort of not prone to give, that it needs again that positive push. And I don't think you can take that view and at the same time be resentful, it's a dichotomy view. I regarded the right to an interesting life, job, as a primary right of Australian women.

GD: But there is a cost to that, isn't there, in terms of who looks after the children? In the next generation who is actually going to come through and be responsible, absolutely? And, there is increasing evidence that because we can't rethink work we've got rigid work structures contributing to family dysfunction. What role do you see government playing in trying to, both by carrot and stick methods, get companies to change the way they allow people to work?

PM: I think it is changing, I think households are quite efficient at working these things out. I wouldn't be as gloomy as I think you think some are about working these things out and we all know, I'm sure you do Geraldine, I do, of families that are in exactly this situation and they work it out very well.

GD: Dare I say that I have actually been through this and you have not. I think a lot of women look on and say look there he is with his neat home and everything is very orderly for him and basically because by either by choice or by need I'm there living in this sort of turmoil and there is a lot of evidence about that. Why would you understand what thousands of people are going through?

PM: Whatever understanding I have of it, I have used to shift public policy in favour of that variation in the style of the Australian family. It's not necessarily a matter for me to say well I have to function that way too, otherwise good policy can't be made.

GD: You've sat in the Cabinet room and I suppose you've had an incredible vantage point there, you have seen the toll that politics and ambition have taken on families of your colleagues. Do you often reflect on that, I wonder?

PM: Public life is very hard, because it is so intrusive it wears away at any family situation. But all the same, there's no point particularly in looking at ourselves, it all gets back to we've got the policy levers so what are we going to do with them? Do we do progressive things with them or do we take reactionary positions? For my part, I hope I've always taken progressive positions.

GD: Maybe it's no longer enough to assume that people understand where you're coming from with the way the world is changing nowadays. It's almost like people have to make a statement about their attitudes to the changing roles between men and women, there's almost an acceptance that things are not as they once were. And maybe that's an area where you haven't bought into this very much at all in the past. I wonder why you're doing it now?

PM: Because now I am Prime Minister, then I was Treasurer and social policy would have been announced by Brian Howe who was then Minister for Social Security, or in the case of women's policy, by Susan Ryan and her successors. The things which you have primary carriage, the announcement impacts, the announcement affects were basically not in the Treasury portfolio. But in the Treasury portfolio certainly all of the capacity and grease on the tracks which put these things into place, obtained. That is I was able to use that job to do many of these things which wouldn't have otherwise been done. But I wasn't the one announcing them and I think what happens in this country is synonymous with your own announcements. People sort of type cast you. It's the same with women in the government, can I say this, that after the 1987 election the factions of the Caucus decided that they would have no women. And I said to Bob Hawke at the time this was an outrage that we've just been returned to office and the notion was that Susan Ryan was in risk of being defeated in the Centre Left and she was the only woman member of the ministry, and I suggested that Bob should say that we insist upon at least each grouping providing a woman. And that's where the three places came from in 1987.

GD: So it was you and not him? We heard it was him.

PM: No, it was me. I put the view to him, and can I say it was a view that Bob was sympathetic with. I wanted to see at the time that Susan was maintained there, I was trying to get Ros Kelly up from the Right of the Party and it was also. I felt it important that one of the women on the Left got a place as well. So I argued this and I didn't have to argue it hard to him because Bob always had, I think, a similar view to me about this, but at least

he then put to the factions that this is as it should be.

GD: And why the opposition to them? How do you determine ...

PM: Jobs, simply jobs about who was able to win them and who was vulnerable. Nothing more than that, you know what sort of scramble takes place after a general election. Amid the scramble a lot of these things get trampled upon. So I went out there barracking for that and I was quite happy and of course, I've always had a lot of loyalty from the people who I've helped, Susan and Ros et cetera.

GD: I think we need a little music break before we actually come back and discussed the vexed issue of unemployment. We happen to have a Mahler here, knowing that you're a fan. Just last Friday the ABC brought out a CD of Stewart Challender's conducting the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's Resurrection Symphony. Which is the part which you like most of that?

PM: If you're listeners can stand it the last five or six minutes.

GD: As good as you hoped?

PM: The orchestra was a bit thin. That's a very hard thing to do well, but it was good enough.

GD: Maybe you need Mahler to listen to when you consider unemployment.

PM: With the conversation we're having it would have been better with the slow movement from the third because to belt your listeners with that is ...

GD: The triumphant Mahler, not quite the tone with which to ...

PM: No.

GD: There does appear to be finally, I suggest to you, rising indignation about youth unemployment in particular and the way it's setting us up to reap a sort of whirl wind of misery in the next ten years, just leaving aside this recession altogether. Even the AMA is urging you now I notice to spend money and set up a national task-force. Can people look forward to anything practical on this issue in the next twelve months?

PM: It's a problem, a real problem, but I don't think we should be unduly gloomy about it. Great strides have been made to take our 15 to 19 year olds and educate them and provide interesting job

opportunities for them in the new order economy we developed from the 1980s. Now certainly we've been through the period of the recession which is both unfortunate and disappointing for many people, but we've also changed from the sorts of jobs we had in the 1950s, '60s and '70s the so called dead-end jobs. There are fewer of them out there for 15 to 19 year olds because, as a cohort they've moved on to the more interesting trained jobs, and I think the statistics are not that well understood. Only about 2 or 3 kids in 10 in that group, 15 to 19 year olds, are in the work force and only about 1 in 10 of them are unemployed.

GD: Yes I understand.

PM: Now that's a problem.

GD: Indeed.

PM: But it's not 46 per cent of them. This notion that half of them are unemployed, that's not right.

GD: True, but even so there's a tragedy in those 2 in 10 anyway and there's a great deal of debate about how many more we should be adding. But even if we look a few years down the track as people have pointed out, we've got so many kids staying on now, what about the log jam when they actually come out into the workforce with high hopes and expectation that education is going to deliver them jobs, and the jobs aren't there and in the next few years there's not a lot of evidence that there's going to be jobs there.

PM: The 1980s proved the jobs were there, that was the point.

GD: Then they vanished and the restructuring is underway and it suggests they've gone.

PM: No, they haven't vanished. We started off with a workforce of 6 million in 1983 and we've today, notwithstanding the unemployment got a workforce of seven and a half million, so it's 25 per cent larger than it was. Those jobs have been held. In the sort of economy we are now developing, a much more sophisticated one where we are adding value to both manufacturing and to services, young people trained for that kind of economy will find jobs. The key for us is to lift product, to lift GDP because whenever one looks at a graphic illustration of unemployment and GDP you find whenever growth rises so too does employment. The key for us is to get growth up.

GD: Yes, but haven't we also known that out of every recession since the 1961 credit squeeze more people

have emerged unemployed at the end of that recession and that is a very unpleasant cyclical trend we haven't escaped?

PM: Because of structural change. The kind of economy that we were in coming into each recession was different from the one we have coming out and it leaves people untrained for the change and we have what's called structural unemployment. Now the aim for us is to get that structural unemployment down and to deal with the long-term unemployed, the people who end up being unemployed for 12 months or more and to get them into labour market programs and get them trained, get them out, get them moving, get them job experience and get them going. But what we're seeking to do now is to look at those 1 in 10 15 to 19 year olds who are unemployed and try and find through a change in entry level training wages, that is a training wage, a wage we pay to those kids in skilled or semi-skilled jobs, let them in and then train them. That's currently what we're looking at, that is trying to take them and say look alright the deadend job has disappeared, the ones which were there in the thousands when I was a kid are now not there. There are jobs but they're trained jobs, you're not trained, what can we do to help you. First of all we'll give you a job, we'll give you job experience ...

GD: Who is going to pay for that?

PM: I think that is going to be done by a combination of the government and employers and this meeting I'm having in a few weeks is about that very thing, that is, what will employers contribute, what will the Commonwealth contribute to taking kids up, giving them work experience, and training them while they are getting it.

GD: Are you talking about a grant scale thing? How much money are we talking about?

PM: We're not down to dollars and cents, but something which is going to make a significant difference to the problem.

GD: In the next six to twelve months?

PM: Geraldine, people should understand that there is something good happening here. What's happened in the 1980s is that we've lost a lot of those jobs which had no future, which were deadend jobs, were not interesting and were low paid ...

GD: No, but they got people into the community, they got them out of their homes.

PM: Yes, and they never got them anywhere else. That was as far as they'd ever got them. The jobs you are sort of seeing, we've seen in the last half a dozen years, people can start off quite young in the job and find themselves in London for six months or find themselves in Tokyo back into Australia. It's now a more interesting economy than it was in the 1960s or 1970s, and even though its stopped growing for the moment, it's now growing again. The fact is that they are more interesting jobs and they're taken by trained people and that's why we have lifted the number of university places sharply in the 1980s, we've added 50 per cent of places to universities and I'm now trying to get technical and further education going so that the 60 per cent of kids who cascade out of school come into a vocational education system if they can't get into university. And again they get trained to be taken up in those jobs. So it's not as if the jobs are not there for them, it's just they are different sorts of jobs. They are trained jobs not untrained jobs.

GD: Yes.

PM: Skilled jobs.

GD: Yes, but you say yourself you have got to create jobs, you've got to make jobs. Those jobs on the sort of scale we are talking about are not there yet in Australia are they?

PM: In the 1980s they were there. They came through very, very fast. That's why what the Government's got to do is get all the structural impediments down, get inflation down, get the competitive influences running through the place.

GD: Are the unions an impediment in this case? Are they going to accept a wage that maybe undermines their entire award structure?

PM: We will get agreement with the trade unions about this particular problem because I think they feel that there is not enough accommodation for kids of this age group in the labour market.

GD: Julian Disney addressed the press club earlier this year and he said that our current level of spending on work creation programs which is quick-fix ...

PM: Labour market programs.

GD: Is one third lower per unemployed person than during the 1982-83 recession, and much lower than in most other developed countries.

- PM: I don't know whether that's true, but the fact is there are 40,000 fewer 15 to 19 year olds unemployed now than there were in 1982-83 - 40,000 fewer.
- GD: And there is a real assertion particularly down in Victoria that the sense of demoralisation is more acute now despite those numbers, than it was in 1982-83. If you're a kid in Broadmeadows you perceive that there is no hope in the future.
- PM: I think that the mood in Victoria is different to the rest of the nation. Unemployment is falling now in NSW, it's falling in WA and it's falling in QLD, but it's rising still in VIC and it's rising in SA and there's no doubt that people will be gloomy about it and perhaps it is an entirely reasonable reaction. My job in that respect is to try and get the economy in general growing and that's the best way of taking employment up. But at the same time, make the training places available for these people so that the job they had searched for at age 19 or 20 is not the job they might have searched for at age 16.
- GD: Say if this gets off the ground, say if this summit produces the best possible result you can imagine, what firms might collaborate with you? And are we going to see people actually to be able to be employed in say September?
- PM: I think so yes, I think those firms which tend to employ quite large numbers of people and don't necessarily require them all to be skilled could take people up. And that would be the aim of this, to take them up.
- GD: You know BHP say, the railways like state government instrumentalities, things like that?
- PM: The big retailers. The ones you mentioned and the large retailing firms, any of the firms which employ large numbers of people have the capacity of taking up, providing that the price and conditions are right.
- GD: And they will bill the government?
- PM: In part yes, for the training component of it. So in other words it's a way of getting that part of the cohort of 15 to 19 year olds, those who are in the workforce, as I say that 2 or 3 in 10 who are in the workforce because the other 7 or 8 are in training in education, that 2 or 3 in 10 and that 1 in 10 who can't find a job. It's that 1 in the 2 or 3 who can't find a job, they're the people we've got to pick up and this is what I hope we can do.

- GD: Dr Hewson is saying today that he will provide \$2 billion if he comes into government to create a youth wage and he claims this will create 500,000 jobs.
- PM: The fact is he claimed his Fightback proposal will create two million jobs. When we pressed him about it he said his proposals were never econometrically modelled, that two million was a guess and he since said on radio two million is not a real world estimate, don't pin me to that. The truth is that what he will do is tear most of these social programs down, he's going to cut about \$7 billion out of outlays and the things that will cop it will be the labour market programs and the training. We're going to put \$700 million in three years into TAFE, he proposed I think to put \$50 million into it. Well it wouldn't touch the sides. The fact is he believes in the survival of the fittest policies, if you're not a millionaire you're a bludger, if you haven't got a decent house and trail of expensive cars to show for it then what have you been doing out there? Telling people after nine months of unemployment benefit you're down to the St Vincent de Paul Society or the Brotherhood of St Lawrence is not the kind of policies, I think, Australians should have or will accept. So when Dr Hewson starts talking about opportunities, training you can take it with a grain of salt because just turn up the Fightback policy and you'll see where he's put his money and his money is not in those areas.
- GD: I'd like to close by bringing it back to the personal and I'm wondering in terms of thinking about the way family life unfolds and looking at the future, most of us who are parents reflect on the way we have parented and probably believe we'd do some things differently if we had our time over again. This is something that you never really talk about a great deal, your concept of yourself I suppose as a parent, as a father, would you do things differently if you had your time again? Have you learned over these years and have you changed?
- PM: You must learn. Life experience, I think, teaches you things and I do wonder what my children will do, How they'll grow up, what jobs they'll have, how their lives will be. I have three girls and a son and I do think more about the girls than I do my son.
- GD: Why?
- PM: Because I think the job opportunities for women have been constrained for a very long time in Australia, it's only more recently they have opened up and getting the training one needs and finding the

opportunities is I think, quite a challenge for them.

GD: I wonder whether with him, he is the man, ironically he is the young man who will be inheriting this totally different world from what we hear where there's actually going to be much more of a demand upon him, ironically the onus will be on him to be a different sort of man to you in the way he sets up a family life. So it's possible that he is the one who's more deserving of your sympathy.

PM: That will happen I think rather naturally, because the person he's likely to share his life with will have different attitudes than our generation and therefore he's likely to grow up comprehending that attitudinal change rather than being confronted by it, that is providing for it rather than being confronted by it. I think there's a sort of naturalness about all that, but women still have a tough go of it in employment. It's not easy, I can see this in the bureaucracy, you can see it in the companies, it's not easy to crack through. Many do of course and do well, but there still needs to be I think, on the part of all of us to open those opportunities up.

GD: And if you had to describe one of the main issues that makes it difficult for them, how would you characterise it?

PM: Just the sort of I think the sort chauvinist view of the world that men are just, employers are not making the adequate adjustment and yet the education system is now churning out thousands of trained women so it is going to change, it's changing and fortunately it's changing fast and it's going to keep on changing. But it's got to change a great deal.

GD: I wonder in terms of the people you employ do you see yourself developing a different relationship with professional women because it is hitting a lot of people at work now in ways it hasn't done in their home.

PM: I have a large complement of professional women on my staff, but this is less true of commerce in general. But again, like everything else it's changing, keep knocking on the door, leaning on the door it will change. But you've got to do it, governments have got to do it, governments have got to be aware of it and try and facilitate it and in the things I spoke to you about before whether it be preservation of superannuation benefits, whether it be a child care provision or whatever these are all things which are going to make it easier. That is higher retention rates in schools, places in

universities, they're all going to make that transition easier and quicker, faster.

GD: Is there any country you'd like us to be modelled on, that offer us some possibilities?

PM: I think we are way ahead of most OECD countries. In terms of, if you like, positive support for women's participation in the workforce and policies which support that notion, I think there are very few OECD countries we can learn that much from. But again, wherever you see a good idea, take it up and do something with it. But like a lot of things Australians are not that aware that so much has been done like the things I mentioned earlier and are still being don.

GD: So if we have a feeling, if women have a feeling or an inkling that you're not a feminist because you're rightly regarded as you said recently as that most conservative of creatures a family man, is that a wrong assessment is it?

PM: I'm a family man and very much in the traditional sense, but in terms of the policies which I have either pushed through myself or I've done in the company of others they are entirely progressive in that sense and whenever I've seen an opportunity to advance the cause of women I have effectively, if often quietly, pushed the policy through and if you don't believe me ask some of the ones I've been associated with. Ask Ros, ask Susan Ryan because they were all around when that all happened.

GD: Alright, thank you very much indeed. It's been good to speak to you. We've been asking you for quite some time so thanks for joining us.

PM: Thank you Geraldine, good.

ENDS