



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP DOORSTOP, THE PARK LANE HOTEL, SYDNEY, 13 NOVEMBER 1992

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J: Mr Keating, do you agree with Dr Hewson's ideas about citizenship?

PM: I think people needing to be here four years, broadly no I don't. I think the two year citizenship has worked well and the question about knowing about the words of the national anthem I thought were made well last night. These things are important, but I do think that most people who take citizenship in this country take it consequently and know what they are doing.

J: Will the process to change the Australian flag be in place by the end of this term of Parliament?

PM: No, what I said was whenever any of our national emblems change the community should know about it, be part of the debate and it shouldn't change without their support.

J: But isn't your Department working out a process for that debate?

PM: No, I'm at least talking about it whenever I get a chance like on occasions such as this.

J: So will you be taking to Cabinet a submission?

PM: No.

J: What would you like to see in place by the year 2000?

PM: As I said there by the year 2000 I think we will see an Australian Head of State. That all of these constitutional issues and constitutional forms should be well debated and discussed in this country, they have been taboo subjects and they shouldn't be.

J: Have you got a personal choice for the Head of State yet?

PM: Well of course I don't. That is a personally silly question.

J: Mr Keating, the changes to 'One Nation' today, how will they help the people on the dole line at present?

PM: What we are ensuring to see today that all of the budgeted expenditure of the "One Nation" package is actually spent. When I announced it we did say that we will need to monitor the spending to see that the spending does take place. We have - but in some areas it is not possible to spend the monies within the financial year we think and so therefore we are moving some of the funding into areas where there is a demonstrated capacity to spend and where there is a greater need and in the labour market programs is one such place.

J: Is that an acknowledgment of failure?

PM: No, you've got to understand some of this was rail money. The States of Australia left the railway systems in a dinosaur position. Now we are trying and very rapidly to pull them back into something like a modern transportation system, but it is going to take time and some of the monies which we had ready for rail line expenditure are now going to be first subject to surveys and engineering planning that basically the State rail system just haven't done. We presume that the State rail systems would have done basic engineering planning and survey work on rail lines and they hadn't done it. So what it means is it will still be done, the money will still be spent, but in a later year, so the systems will still be built just as we planned except that in this year where we need the money spent for national employment reasons we will move some of those funds into places where we can spend the money fruitfully and quickly.

J: ... (Inaudible)

PM: No, if you are going to try and spend a couple of billion in this country within a year you've got to be careful about how you do it and if its not running as quickly in some areas you shift it to others. It's just a sensible business like thing to do.

J: Who is responsible for the delay in your opinion specifically?

PM: Delay in spending rail money?

J: Well in the 'One Nation' package in total, local government, the States?

PM: It is basically the State rail systems who are trying to scramble from fifty years of obsolescence, that's the problem. But that is not a problem in itself because we'll just add that money on in the out years, so the projects will be completed but over a longer time frame, another financial year will be added to the existing construction phases and what that means is it will free up funds this year which can be spent where there is a lot of demand. There is a lot of demand for the labour market programs amongst young people.

J: How long do you think it will take before jobs are actually being created from the money announced today?

PM: For instance Jobstart is running very strongly as a demand driven program and requires more funding so basically that will go on from this very day. Some of the others we are trying to put the labour market programs into groups so that we can group them for large employers so that they can take them on rather than as individual persons for individual programs, they take them as a job lot, that is by their hundreds. So what we've done is change the nature of some of these programs so they can be packaged up, that means that we will need to spend more money on them - that's what we did last night.

J: How many extra jobs will be created as a result of the extra spending?

PM: It is a matter of not just the extra jobs from the extra spending, but realising the jobs that have come from the spending are already available and as we've said that could be for young people. We have enough funding there to give 100,000 young people between fifteen and nineteen six months training and a wage subsidy at the end. So it is a matter of whether we can get those programs up and we can get companies and institutions to take them on.

J: Are the States doing enough?

PM: They are doing all the things we have asked of them by and large, they have dropped the ball a bit in relation to rail, but beyond that by and large they are doing their part in road works and local government is doing more than its part in the Local Government Program which we introduced in the Budget. In fact that is now at the point where we can spend additional monies on it and we are spending additional monies on it as of last night.

J: Any specific States?

PM: No, I can't remember which ones.

J: Would you consider releasing more funds if unemployment doesn't fall?

- PM: This year demonstrates two things - that the fiscal stimulus was the right thing to do, John Hewson said we should cut \$7 billion out of the Budget, we've added \$2 billion on to it and if we cut \$7 billion out the economy would just go back into recession. The OECD the day before yesterday urged governments to embark upon an expansionary fiscal policy and we are doing it. The key point here is that the Opposition's policies would push Australia back into in a recession and while the economy isn't growing as fast as we would like it, we are on the right policy track and what we were doing last night is fine tuning the policy we already have.
- J: Prime Minister what's your reaction to the 800 rail jobs going in NSW today?
- PM: I didn't hear about that, I've only just heard from you.
- J: Prime Minister, do you still believe that unemployment will be below 10 per cent by next year's Budget?
- PM: The forecasts for employment are very much on track with the Budget. We are probably under target on unemployment at this stage of the year.
- J: Can you recite the words to the national anthem?
- PM: I know both verses as a matter of fact, but I'm not singing them for you. I'll write them down just give me a bit of paper and I'll write them down for you. I just had a bad chest cold, but I can assure you I learnt them after we adopted it in the 1970s and I've been singing it manfully right around the country ever since, even if all of you haven't.

ENDS