



## PRIME MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
OPENING OF MICHAEL LAVARCH'S CAMPAIGN OFFICE, STRATHPINE  
QUEENSLAND, 7 APRIL 1993**

### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

Thank you for that very generous round of applause, and could I thank the Premier, Wayne Goss, for that generous introduction, and say how pleased I am to be here with Michael and Linda. My Parliamentary Colleagues, Party President and other members who are supportive of the Queensland Labor Party, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is always interesting after an election to see what the published polls say, because they are more likely to get it right after the event than before the event, particularly with exit polls and the rest. What the last week or two has shown is that Government support has risen and Coalition support has fallen remarkably. I think we are entitled to say, or to conclude from that, the public have thought about the election in the three weeks or so since, and have decided that they have done the right thing. They thought their decision was right. These were not just confluences of circumstances which lead them to a particular decision, that upon more mature reflection they might like to reconsider. I think if the polls give us any indication, they are only into indications and not levels, the levels invariably are not that accurate. But as indications, it is an indication that the public had thought that it was right. What we did was right. And that I think is very good for the country, very good for the Government, because I think that for that sense of appraisal to have taken place is important.

And of course they don't go against the background of a Coalition Party which has literally dropped its bundle. We have seen in the weeks since the election, the Coalition now without a policy, without any idea of what basis of appeal they believe they should have for Australia, let alone for themselves. So they have a candidate fielded in this election for the electorate of Dickson who is a candidate campaigning on a policy that doesn't exist, and the only policy that exists of course, as Wayne indicated in his speech, one borrowed from Thatcher in the late 1970s, what was basically an agenda policy of the Treasuries of the Western World in the 1970s - the British Treasury, the Australian Treasury - and which where having the world moved on the Coalition picked it up and ran mightily with it.

But again, as Wayne intimated, their policies not only lack breadth and depth, but it lacked any sense of charity. I think the public thought to themselves, there has got to be more than one's nose to the grindstone, there's got to be more than this concept of no gain without pain, there had to be something better, something broader, something deeper, a greater sense of community than that which we have been offered by the Coalition, and one which is going to seriously disadvantage many Australians, particularly working Australians.

So it is very, in a sense, interesting that in one of the fastest growing parts of Australia we are now going to have another contest, another election. An election for the seat of Dickson, an election which has arisen in quite extraordinary circumstances and where we are also proposing another quite novel feature of the election, and that is the Labor Government of the Commonwealth is saying to the people of Dickson should you consider our candidate, and consider him worthy to be elected as Member for Dickson, we will make him a member of the Cabinet of the Commonwealth.

This says a number of things. The first thing it says is that we would not have presumed to have sworn Michael Lavarch as Attorney General, but rather made clear we would nominate him upon the people's choice, first point. Second point is that he is coming as a member of Parliament from the State of Queensland and as a very young man to a senior ministerial job. The first law officer of the Commonwealth at the age of 31. Those two points are very important. The third is, that he comes representing a community which is growing very strongly, where there is a demand for services, where he is perhaps as representative as anyone might wish to be from one of the growing areas of Australia, and saying we put a premium on that sort of an area in this country being represented in the cabinet of the government of Australia. Because our Government is about governing broadly and governing for people who are not advantaged by wealth, and not advantaged by great circumstance and who often live with the vagaries and difficulties of a rapidly growing suburb or region. Michael talked about the services which this area needs and those which the Commonwealth has proposed, and has introduced over time, but where in an area growing twice as fast as this, in a State which is the fastest growing State of Australia, Queensland, that so typically that we have chosen such a person to represent us.

I think on those three counts, I hope the people of Dickson take the view that they would choose wisely in choosing Michael Lavarch, someone who has already served Queensland in the seat of Fisher, who has served in local Government who understands the community, is of the community, is from the community and will represent the community. I don't think any party can offer much more than that to any constituency, to any electorate, and I think that we are offering. We are offering as well the opportunity for the people of Dickson to be part of the generational change in the Government of the Commonwealth.

This is an important thing. Governments, particularly governments that have had ten years in office, need that change, they need that horse power, that charge, the energy which comes from fresh ideas and fresh faces. Yesterday we had our first Cabinet meeting of the newly sworn Cabinet and just the change in the composition and the relative age of the members. I said to Brian Howe who was sitting beside me, we are now a couple of oldies in here. It was true I think, and the conversation had some zest. People had read the brief and they wanted to put their view, and I felt all of that electricity and charge that one felt in the flush of the Government's election in 1983 through the 1980s. Seeing it there again really is very, very encouraging indeed.

That is why I think that Michael Lavarch's election in Dickson can just accelerate that process by seeing a Queenslander in one of the real jobs, the strong portfolio of the Commonwealth, the Attorney-Generalship of this country.

We say that we would use our mandate well, we will use it conscientiously. And everything we have done since the election should demonstrate to the public that that is so. That nothing will be taken for granted, that the public have taken us on trust and it is trust that we will return to them, and that we will use both the opportunities and the time to the best of our advantage and theirs.

All of that augurs well for Australia, and I might it augurs well for Queensland. Because always I get a charge from the throb of Queensland, you get that throb about the place because it is growing, it is expanding, it is moving, there is optimism here. I just spent a week in North Queensland, and I was making the point to the Premier on the way across that coming through this electorate, the growing area, it's got all the buzz of a place on the move as one gets right throughout Queensland. We do have great opportunities in Australia and one of the places of opportunities is the State of Queensland, and it is governed by a government which is going to be doing the same things and thinking the same way as the Commonwealth Government so that we advance together, we use the huge power of the Commonwealth with the co-operation of Wayne and his Government in ways that I think Premiers like Joh Bjelke-Petersen and others just let opportunities slip by, by naked, narrow, politicising of State and Commonwealth dichotomies, having attacks upon the Commonwealth government, who ever it might be, which was not really productive for the people of Queensland.

That has all changed. We have got a very co-operative relationship and one where the Commonwealth today is doing things which formerly was the preserve of the States and where the States were doing things for the Commonwealth in areas which were only done by us. I think the changes we made at the Commonwealth Council of Australian Governments, where we can sit down and discuss non-financial matters in things like education, in railways, in courts, in the micro-economy, in packaging, in standards and all these other things, are things where co-operative Federalism does mean something in the hands of good people and people who want to do things.

So I am very encouraged, naturally I suppose, by the events of the last month, but I'm particularly encouraged by the circumstances we find ourselves in with the Government here in Queensland and in Australia generally.

Let me say a few special words for our friends in the Opposition. I don't want to leave them out. The National Party, of course, laid a dead hand on Australia for most of the post-War years. If there is one reason why Australia has got structural problems today it is because of the hayseeds of the National Party. Even those rare well springs of inspiration that might have come from Liberal Party ministers in Coalition governments were extinguished by the dead hand of the National Party. Whose view has always been, and it has been particularly true in education. Michael, Wayne, Linda and I were just at a State High School and we were talking about the opportunities for kids and the importance of higher education, tertiary and vocational education. The National Party were not big on education, they wanted people educated no further than primary school and then happily voting for the National Party. That was their model, the model they work in. Holding up a TAFE or a university to the National Party is like some institution they moved back from. They just don't like what it stands for.

The National Party have been a force in Queensland. They filled a void, a political void not a community void, and now their National Party in coalition with the Liberal Party just don't know what they stand for. They have got no idea what they stand for, they have not developed any model of Australian society, they don't know where they want to see the place, they don't know how they want to see it, they are still fighting rear guard actions on everything that you imagine and adopting the most right wing ideology where ever it is possible.

John Hewson said that if he was forced to dump the GST he would resign. Well he was forced to dump the GST by his party and he is still there. So that means he never meant it or the GST was just a device. Whatever it means, it means the Liberal Party is in a state of ideological and policy chaos.

And we say to the public of Queensland in the electorate of Dickson don't elect a party that doesn't know what it wants to do for you. Don't elect a party that not only doesn't know what it wants to do for you, but of course is not going to be in office.

So this is a time when the conservative forces in this country have got to re-think a position for Australia beyond the morbid ideological positions they have thought in the past. Let's hope that they understand that Australia is a country with great opportunities, that it is a country that will always be best when people are looking up, not looking down, that we can have progress without pain, we can if we give people the opportunity and put faith in them, they can do good things, and close as we are in the Asia-Pacific where such opportunities abound and where we have already made inexplicable links, that our future is as a country which is very proud of its identity and understands what it is and goes to the world making that clear.

I don't know whether you noticed two days ago in the international press one central newspaper in China making this very point about Australia saying they are shaking off the colonial yoke, in all ways Australia is now ready to join the region, we welcome them. This is the point they don't understand. And there they all were the Nats, over at the school waving their banners half an hour ago, and most of the slogans are all the remnant issues that they will fight to the death as the country moves on.

I say this to the people of Dickson, let's move on.

Leave them behind, they have nothing to offer. Maybe at some point in the future they will, it is going to be a long way off. The public have made a wise decision in re-electing the Government, and as a result the Government has taken their mandate conscientiously and given them a young, vibrant Cabinet in return and commitment to the policies we espouse and the philosophy of Australian life we espoused in the election campaign.

So I can only enjoin them to re-elect Michael Lavarch to the House of Representatives, and on so doing it would be my great pleasure then to recommend him to the Governor General as Attorney-General to the Commonwealth so that one of the fastest developing areas of Brisbane, of Queensland will be represented right in the key forum of the National Government - the Cabinet - and where the State of Queensland in general will find his representation being enhanced by that very high office.

So to all of you who have fought the last election and found that you were scratched just before the race, my commiserations, but let's say it was the preparation for a bigger event, another election, perhaps a more meaningful endorsement of the Labor Party and its young, talented candidate in the electorate of Dickson.

Thank you.