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PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT FROM PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO THE AUSTRALIAN TOURISM TASK FORCE LUNCHEON, SYDNEY, 11/6/93

"...Australia does have great things about it and I think it's very important that we understand ourselves what we have and seek to protect it. John (Brown) mentioned at the table the importance now of the environment in tourism, and people coming to Australia to see something that they can't see in any other part of the world...this is just about the oldest part of the world's crust, the flora and the fauna here are different to everywhere else in the world and people do come here to see something they can't see somewhere else and it's important therefore that we protect a lot of these things.

And I think that some of the things we did in the eighties, like preserving the wet tropics area of north Queensland has been an important draw to the north Queensland community, the work of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in preserving the Marine Park and understanding it better - the reef ecosystem better - is important to us, the declarations of some of the wilderness areas of NSW and Tasmania have been important, the role of the States themselves - let me pay tribute to Neville in the period he was Premier in declaring National Parks in NSW - these things are quite important and we have as a country taken opportunities to preserve the natural environment in many key places.

We've not done as well with the built environment, and I think this lets a lot of people down and it is one of the things we have to concentrate on over the period, but it is important that places important to tourism are developed sensitively. Let me give you an example say with Cairns in Queensland. Cairns is a place which has not been developed sensitively. It's an important tourism place. There's no point in building 16 storey hotels in the middle of Cairns when the building next door is a two storey warehouse or one storey residential accommodation. You can double the footprint of these buildings and halve the height and keep them more of human scale than just letting the developers dominate these municipal or shire councils, or city councils trying to get their way.

And I think it's important to take stock of places like Cairns to say, look, if this is one of the attractions, let's keep it an attraction. If people come here to see it as a town in the Queensland tropics, let's keep like a town in the Queensland tropics and let's not develop

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It as a Miami Beach or Surfers Paradise or somewhere else. In that wonderful hinterland of Cairns across the river of that wonderful mountain and the mangroves, there is a development proposal there, and it may well be that that development could proceed but again, in those things, you're then playing with the actual attractions of the city itself and you notice it. I'll give you an example, you cross into Douglas shire in Queensland - no building above tree height, the environment and public access to the beaches and things have a premium on them and of course the development of the wet tropics area which is within that shire - all of those things go towards making a long term attraction for the tourism industry.

I think the environment and the built environment beyond the capital cities are very important to us - as are the services we provide in the capital cities themselves. And in Sydney, which is of course the main port of entry for tourism, we tried to do things not only has the city improved dramatically over the past ten years - and again let me pay tribute to Neville (Wran) for developing a core in the City of Sydney, if you like, in these key places like Darling Harbour and the Macquarie Street area and down by the Quay-side - these are important things and I was very pleased to see John Fahey express interest a week or two ago in knocking over the Cahill Expressway and beautifying the whole Quay-side area.

We've just done a deal with the Sydney City Council with Frank Sartor, where we've now, on a sixty year lease, given the City of Sydney the Customs House which we think will be the key civic building of the Quay-side and can provide, itself, an important contribution to Quay-side tourism and tourism of the city with so much of the maritime history which the Quay represents being involved there. And of course the buildings near the Opera House which we've just signed an agreement with the City Council to see them sensitively developed with proper height limitations to pay due and appropriate deference to one of the world's greatest buildings, the Opera House, is again another important thing in terms of Sydney.

As are things like the second runway which has taken so many years to bring to fruition and yet we're seeing substantial and rapid progress on seeing that second runway form itself out there in the bay and seeing it go into place. All these things, I think, are things the Federal Government's been involved in so its more than just a bit of money to the Tourism Commission and something in the depreciation schedules, I think we've been genuinely interested in the industry as a destination for people to come in these areas of the capital cities and the services in the cities and beyond the cities in the remote areas, to keep them as beautiful as we've known them to be and where they have to be maintained.

That is, there should be an emphasis on the environment and an emphasis on beauty. This is not a word which, in planning terms, ever sort of cuts the mustard. Providing we're always run by either developers or engineers but not often enough by architects and the result is we are not beautifying our capital cities. And if we are not wise to that we won't

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attract people to this country to come and see it. Why would you come and see something you can go to see down the west or east coast of the United States when we're sort of seeking to emulate or duplicate what they have when in fact we can do something so much better. So the environment I think does matter a great deal.

Airlines have been another important change in the One Nation package. One of the important changes was for Qantas to acquire Australian Airlines so that we could develop Ansett as a second international carrier. You will have noticed in the last week or two that Ansett are now flying to parts of south-east Asia and will now qualify for some important schedule of flight into Kansai Airport, Osaka Airport, service in Japan and this is an important development in our aviation history, to develop a second Australian carrier and to have it working out there is going to be very important to tourism.

Can I also say that we are having a dispute with the United States at the moment about Northwest Airlines and I think that Qantas as a corporate entity and its role in the world has been important to the Government and to all Australians but I don't want to see the Australia-Japan traffic dominated by just a couple of carriers where they are basically lifting an economic rent out of the travellers and diminishing the number of people coming to Australia. These things should always be kept in balance.

Nor do we want to see American carriers breaking their signed agreements in terms of their access. We can have access and people on these routes providing that they are negotiated ones but where the objective has to be that more people visit Australia than not. So in terms of what will guide our policy towards these things it will be the number of people coming to Australia rather than which particular Airline is flying them, but I don't in that sense want to give Northwest any encouragement that is those who break agreements can't expect to be treated well. But, again, Australia will have a balanced approach towards airline policy both in and out of Australia and policy will not be made exclusively for Qantas.

Now, we did well with Qantas and we'll do well when we see it developed as a public company where it's got a better availability of capital to it and can develop itself properly, which it has not really been able to do with a Government guarantee and a lot of debt, and I do look forward to that time and I think the British Airways purchase of Qantas will make a great deal of difference to the operations of Qantas within a world system, and the fit between British Airways routes and Qantas routes was really quite an uncanny fit and one which should be a partnership that works well. But, again, they'll only be a minority holder in Qantas and the majority, which will be the Australian public ought to be able to turn Qantas into a first class carrier with a good debt to equity ratio in the company, and with people like Mr Pemberton as its Chair then there's really no reason why we can't develop an airline company with already a substantial reputation can grow along in Asia. But seeing Ansett grow along with it will be, I think, important to us as well.

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When I was recently in New Zealand with Prime Minister Jim Bolger we agreed on facilitating trans-Tasman flying and we'll be flying domestic terminal to domestic terminal probably by Christmas and this should make quite a difference to tourism across the Tasman where you can go on to an Australian Airlines or Ansett flight and hop off in Wellington or Auckland as the case may be rather than through the international terminals and this is another change which came from the One Nation package. So the shift to the acquisition of Australian by Qantas, the development of Ansett as a second carrier, the trans-Tasman flying this must augur well for the tourism industry in general in getting more sensible airline arrangements.

The other thing I think we need to do is to again focus on our cultural identity and this is why I think it is important - not that we want to sign everybody up - though we'd like to - not that we can sign everybody up in the movement to an Australian Republic but the fact is that it will help our identity as will coming to terms with the aspirations of Aboriginal Australia. Aboriginal culture is now featuring much more in the culture of Australia and in the culture of Australian tourism as it should. And as one of the signature tunes of this country in terms of its art and what have you and of course the more we progress that issue as a country the better off we'll be, not only at home in our own relations one to another, but in the view of the rest of the world which approves of countries which can get their acts together and run themselves sensibly and at the same time distinguishing our culture by what the Aboriginal community can bring to the culture of Australia. So these things like our cultural identity, the environment, having a sensible transportation policy, as well as all the other things, general promotion, tax incentives and the like, I think are important and that's why I have wanted to see tourism as a Cabinet ranked post and why we've set up a department of Tourism because it is an important industry and it can play an important role and I know in Michael Lee we have a Minister who will take the industry's interests to heart and barrack for them sensibly and appropriately in the places that matter."