



## **PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH AND INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE HON P J KEATING, M.P.  
GEELONG WOOL COMBING PLANT OPENING, CORIO, VIC  
FRIDAY 10 DECEMBER, 1993**

(Opening Remarks - Speech):

I am very delighted to be here on this occasion. I think this says a great deal about the change which is taking place in Australia, indeed, in just this last couple of days you can see the threads of the potential of the nineties coming together.... with a conclusion of the GATT Round drawing to a close - the benefits of which, as you know, Australia has put the Cairns group together and fought within the GATT now for seven years. And this agreement looks likely to be conservatively worth about two and a half billion to Australia, which will make a tremendous amount of difference - not just in agriculture but in the trade in goods and services. We have seen, yesterday, news of further employment growth in the economy leading now to 100,000 new jobs in three months which means the economy is ticking away..... We had confirmation just a week or two ago of the economy growing at about three and quarter percent and a week before that with inflation around two percent.

These are good things and we are seeing plants like this being developed in the wake of Australia's competitiveness which has now been with us for the better part of about six or seven years. So, this is a very great change and one which, I think, these various portents hold for the 1990s and for Australia taking its place more fully as a trading entity in the world.....

(Doorstop interview):

**J:** Prime Minister, have you had any response from the United States about your concerns about the Blair House agreement?

**PM:** Well, we will be pursuing the market access questions right up until the last moment but I think we have to record that the seven years of organisation and lobbying which Australia has organised through the Cairns Group has now paid substantial dividends for us because we have kept the pressure on the system and we are going to get an agreement under the GATT - and that agreement will conservatively be worth two and a half billion dollars to Australia. That's the bulk of it. And its a case now of understanding that with the large part of the bulk of it in place we're now chasing down the last of the market access questions and we'll do that right up until the agreement is concluded.

**J:** What was the detail of the letter?

**PM:** Well, just saying that we'll still be pressing for access on particular commodities but recording, with the President, our pleasure with the United States' position to maintain the thrust of the Blair House agreement, the Blair House Accord between the Government of the United States and the European Community. That's what we wanted most preserved. And the substance of that has been preserved and so we're encouraging the President to complete the round, or have pressure on to complete the round, also saying that in terms of some of the market access questions we'd like to pursue these so that Australia walks away with the best possible deal we can get.

**J:** ...(inaudible).. angry that it's been watered down?

**PM:** The Australian media wants to be permanently angry. What about being permanently happy for a change? And that is to say that we've got an outcome that we could not have envisaged seven years ago.... not even have envisaged seven years ago. At least a two and a half billion dollar benefit to Australia; most of that agricultural change that is there is because of this government. This government has built the structure to develop a real place in the negotiations of an international GATT Round. And we're now starting to draw some of the success from that in the closing days of the Uruguay Round. So, for Australia it's going to be a tip top outcome. And if you take a plant like this plant here - this plant will now feed its product into a world textile industry which is no longer constrained by the multi-fibre agreement, it's a two hundred billion dollar

Industry and it's going to be opened up to us. These are the sort of opportunities which the GATT can produce which Australia has gone for from the first moment it started in 1986.

J: If GATT was to go ahead with the amended Blair House Agreement in place would it still be a tip top agreement?

PM: Let me just make a more general point because I haven't got all day here - I think what the GATT's going to do is underwrite a real pick-up in confidence in the world and in Australia. And that's coming as we confirm that the Australian economy is growing at three and a half percent, as we saw yesterday the creation of 100,000 jobs in three months, as we saw two weeks ago inflation at around two percent. Australia is really well poised to ship products competitively into the world as it renews its own economic recovery. And so, we're now a better set-up than perhaps we've been in the last 20 or 30 years - probably since the war - to participate in world trade as a competitive, innovative nation and doing it in a way which also brings the regions of Australia into it, like Geelong and other regional parts of the country.

J: ...(inaudible)... on rice, what would you consider a good outcome?

PM: I'm not here to give you a blow by blow, commodity by commodity answer to that... simply to say that I was at the 1986 OECD meeting where the Europeans were resisting putting agriculture into the OECD communique. Australia got it into the communique, we got it onto the G7 Summit in Tokyo which was presided over by President Reagan, and a consequence of that is that agriculture went into the round. And not just agriculture, all the other things Australia is interested in, trade in services and international property rights. So, we will have set up in a background in trade that which we have never had before, and a large part of that structure has been put there by Australia. And that's why I think the Australian community should understand that a very big thing is happening here, and, I think, a very great achievement and one that I hope will stand our economy in good stead for the next half century.

J: Can I ask a question about South Australia? What chance for Labor?

PM: In elections you have to wait and see, as we found in March 1993. I notice there is very demure punting by the media these days - once bitten, twice shy - and all I say is, that's a good policy.

Ends.