



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J  
KEATING, M.P.,  
GLENQUARIE SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE, MACQUARIE FIELDS  
THURSDAY 27 JANUARY, 1994**

**J:** Prime Minister, do you have any thoughts on who might be the new Industry Minister?

**PM:** No, I'll make that announcement, probably, by the weekend.

**J:** When did you find out about the latest allegations....?

**PM:** I haven't even caught up on that, to be honest. Mr Griffiths is no longer in the ministry and that's the key point.

**J:** Mr Keating what is your reaction to the attack on Prince Charles last night?

**PM:** Well, I was appalled by it. Prince Charles is a good friend of this country and deserves to be treated as a good friend in this country.

**J:** What did you think of the efforts of Mr Fahey and Mr Kiernan?

**PM:** Well, security is always difficult and I think what Michael Heseltine said today was pretty right. That is, it's never possible to guarantee complete security in those circumstances but, as it turned out, the so-called attempt was really a political demonstration and I think that's how it should be viewed.

**J:** Prime Minister, how did you interpret yesterday's speech by Prince Charles?

**PM:** I thought it was a very clear minded speech with a sort of confident detachment where the Prince said, This is a debate, as the republic, which Australians should decide. And he said, For my part, I think this shows the signs of a mature and confident country. In other words, For my part it's a good thing you are having this debate - it's a good thing for you that you are having this debate. I think it's

a very clear statement by a member of the royal family that the republic is, of course, a matter for Australians and that he, Prince Charles, thinks that a debate like this reflects our confidence and maturity. And, coming as it has, directly and forthrightly from him, I think it is an important contribution to our national political discussion.

- J: Is John Howard right though when he says that the Prince wouldn't say anything else, except that it is up to Australians.
- PM: John Howard will always put the best construction on his side of the case. John Howard would not be pleased at the notion that the Prince thinks this debate is one of a mature and confident country. That is, John Howard doesn't want this debate and he doesn't want us to be confident even if he thinks we are mature.
- J: Prime Minister, the media have said that the speech actually reflected the Prince's support for a republic. Do you interpret it as strongly as that?
- PM: Well, he's saying, I think this an appropriate debate for a confident and mature country to have. He's said that directly, absolutely and he said, it's a matter for you to make your mind up about it.
- J: So it's as far as he can go...?
- PM: I think it's a remark of confident detachment - removed from the issue but giving a confident overview of the debate. And, I think, we most appreciate that comment from him.
- J: How do you see that comment, though?
- PM: As I've just said, I think it's a helpful contribution to Australia's national discussion about its identity and its constitutional future.
- J: Do you think his trip will support the monarchists? Do you think they'll get a boost from this trip?
- PM: Well, I don't think so and I don't think he means it to be so. I think he means to come here, as he always describes himself, as a friend of this country, someone who has never been at odds with its interests and who comes here in a relaxed, confident way. That's how he means to come, that's how we should receive him.
- J: Is the ministerial reshuffle taking longer than what you first thought considering that it's now... inaudible...?
- PM: No, I've just had other things to do. Mr Griffiths has left the ministry so that was a key matter to resolve and that's resolved. And, it's really up to me, now, to decide.

J: Who will head up the independent inquiry?

PM: Again, I'm thinking about that but I have taken advice from the Commonwealth police that I should see what the progress of their enquiries is before we set the terms of reference.

J: Mr Keating, when are you likely to announce a ministerial inquiry?

PM: As I said, I'll be guided by what the Commonwealth police say about this.

J: What do you think of the efforts of Mr Fahey and Mr Kierman helping tackle this alleged assailant?

PM: I think it's something any person should do and they did it with alacrity and they're to be complimented for that, commended for that. And they did it, of course, in the service of a good friend of this country.

Ends.