



**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
DOORSTOP, PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
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PM: The truth is, it is not a bad result. The one consistent thing about these two by-elections is that the public won't have a bar of the Liberal Party. There was a swing to Labor in Fremantle and a swing to the Liberals of three and a bit per cent in Bonython, which means in a real election that we would clean them up as we have done in the past. So, I suppose, if I had to borrow a phrase from Les Patterson I would say about this result, "no worries". It is a pretty much in the groove by-election result and what really happens in these by-elections I think is that the public say we want you to stay sharp and we are not going to make it easy for you, particularly when you have a number of minor parties. But I want to thank the people for Bonython for returning another Labor member, a member of stature to the National Parliament for the Labor Party and I would like to make the point about the generational change which is occurring within the Government. If you look at the last three by-elections, replacing men who have given a great deal of public service over a decade of ministerial office, John Kerin, John Dawkins and Neal Blewett have been replaced by Mark Latham and Carmen Lawrence and now by Martyn Evans. I mean, three great ministers replaced by three great candidates. And that is really why the Labor Party is going to be the force it is now through the nineties. And look at the fogies on the other side. I notice Peter Robinson today described them appropriately as fogies. I mean Tony Abbott, Downer, Bishop, these people believe in things that the Liberal Party and others believed in in the 1940's and 50's and I said last week you wouldn't find a 35 year old in the country that holds Tony Abbotts views. In fact the members who are leaving - Jim Carlton and Michael MacKellar - were far more progressive than the people they are being replaced with.

J: What are your thoughts on the anti-immigration crowd ending up with .....

PM: Oh, I think that just comes and goes. These things come and go I think Peter. I don't give that any particular weight. But I think I regard one of the important things for the government is having a generational change and as you know since the last election now about fourteen ministers, or thirteen I am not

sure thirteen or fourteen ministers, out of the stock of the government have been changed, are new ministers. And if you look at the quality we are getting in the by-elections ..... I mean what used to happen to the Labor Party in the 60's is all the crackerjack candidates were in marginal seats and when you would lose a seat you would lose them and the safe seats often went to people who were not going to make a great contribution. That's all being reversed.

- J: You say generally you would clean them up but on an 8 per cent two party swing they would clean you up surely?
- PM: Look, this is the sort of thing about these days by-elections ..... well just have a look for a start, have a look in Fremantle which everyone is talking about Western Australia and Richard Court and what sort of mandate he has got and how he's going and here we are in the state where Mabo mattered most, picking up a swing to the government. Here we are in a state now in South Australia where there has just been a massive swing against the State Labor Party, basically with a 3 per cent swing to the Liberal Party and a bit flipping off to minor candidates. As I said it is a no worries result.
- J: Wern't there more revelant federal issues, was it a vote against the Medicare levy?
- PM: No, hardly hit the light of day. Look the other thing is you have got to understand this also about polls these days - I am not talking about by-elections but just polls - I mean what happens in polls these days, people go up and say what is your preference, are you going to vote for the Coalition or the Labor Party, they say "well I probably would vote for the Labor Party, but I will say the Coalition because I will just give the government a little needle." So they are giving little needles in the polls these days. They have worked all that out, but of course the pollsters haven't worked it out and generally the journo's haven't worked it out but - I'm glad the camera man can see the humour in all this even if the journo's can't, but it is true.
- J: Prime Minister are you able to give any indication of what the ministerial changes might be announced next week?
- PM: Not at this stage, no. I told you I very much hope to see Carmen Lawrence take a place in the ministry and I think I would like to see her with a policy job. I don't know what that will be at this stage but it is going to be a very big week for the government, I mean getting two people of the calibre of Carmen Lawrence and Martyn Evans is a tremendous shot in the arm for the Federal Labor Party, a huge shot in the arm.
- J: What does the 3 per cent swing or 3.5 per cent swing say about Dr Hewson's leadership?
- PM: I think, look what he's into now, I mean, poor fella, look six months ago he was into throwing people off the dole after 9 months. He was going to clean out the social wage, put people on individual wage contracts, now he is into re-

making himself, into product differentiation from all the other fogies. So now he's using the word inclusion, as I said, I take that as a compliment, he's got to borrow our phrases. He is now running around as a sort of person who is re-making himself into a softer gentler version of his dear old right-wing self of last year. Now what is the problem here? The problem here is the Liberal Party does not know where it stands with Australian society. It doesn't know what it wants to do with Australian society and Menzies was probably right when he told Bob Santamaria some what decade ago, fifteen years ago, that the Liberal Party had probably run its race then. Well it has more than run its race now.

J: Some Labor MPs seem to think the Griffith's vacancy should be filled now .....?

PM: I mean, you know I think the Party, I said the other day I think the Party is pretty fair about these things. This matter has come up and the police have cleared Alan but there are residual matters to be determined, with Police enquiries, and that is for him inconvenient but I mean I think all of that doesn't matter whether there is a place there now for him or not, what matters I think is the government will always be, or caucus will always be, sympathetic to somebody who has been, you know, caught in these sort of circumstances.

J: Does that mean they could accommodate him later down the track .....?

PM: Well, now or later on. I mean I don't ever think it is quite the mechanical thing of leaving a spot there and then saying well if that's not there that is the end of you. I don't think the Caucus works like that.

J: Mr Keating does the government plan to abolish lump-sum super payments?

PM: This is just a pre-budget story. They flow out every year, all this pre-budget speculation and the government has not considered it.

J: Just going back to the Bonython by-election, how long do you think it might be before South Australian's actually forgive Labor rightly or wrongly for the State Bank .....?

PM: When they work out what a dreary government they have got. I think this government of all the State Governments, and our ministers run into their ministers in ministerial councils, the functional ministerial councils, by far the dreariest government is the new Liberal government of South Australia. Now at the moment there is a bit of bonhomie about a new government a new Premier, but wait till they have a bit of time, they will see how absolutely dead ordinary this government is.

Thanks