



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
DOORSTOP, FAIRBAIRN RAAF BASE  
14 APRIL 1994**

**E&OE PROOF COPY**

**J:** Mr Keating, were you happy with the overall outcome of the trip?

**PM:** I think in trade and foreign policy terms it couldn't have been better. Starting with the handing over of the Friendship Bridge between Thailand and Laos, I think it was the cause of the introduction of a new relationship for these two countries which, of course, have got a long history together. In many respects close features to their history, plus separated now for to long and I think that has been changing, and as a consequence of the Bridge I hope a lot of things will happen there.

And the visit to Thailand was, I think, important to talk to the Thai Government, to get to understand a bit about their view of the region and their economy, doing more with Australia. This is the second largest economy in ASEAN, there is much more we can do there. And the visit to Vietnam really couldn't have been better. The discussions I had with the Government had all the weight and quality that one could ever have hoped for.

**J:** Were you a little disappointed though, with the domestic storm ...?

**PM:** Well, no, those things they pass through, what matters is the weight that sits under them and the relationship with the Government of Vietnam, with the President, the Prime Minister and the General Secretary, the meetings I had there couldn't have been better. This is a country which has done it hard for a very long time and is now trying to come up, to lift their people out of poverty and to take a part in the region and Australia is there helping.

We have got nearly a billion dollars worth of investment there, we just doubled our aid budget to them, and I think they appreciate the interest which Australia has in them. So, in terms of three countries in the region where we have had a long association, particularly in Thailand and now with Laos and Vietnam, I was very happy with the meetings, the visits, the quality of the discussions, the genuine friendship and the understanding.

Thank you.