



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
SYDNEY AIRPORT  
MONDAY 29 AUGUST, 1994**

**J:** Mr Keating, you mentioned moving into Asia and business. Do you think Australia's interests would be better served by a free trade area in Asia or a GATT consistent area?

**PM:** Australia's interests are going to be buffered by getting trade barriers down. There are so many of them in the Asia-Pacific these days that getting them down is what it is all about. And, it is going to be a difficult task, to do it, but something which we'll all benefit from. So, the whole question about whether this is MFN or preferential is really ancillary to the main point, let's get the barriers down.

**J:** Are you too far ahead of business, given the Asia-Pacific Business Network's opposition..?

**PM:** I've never heard of that organisation so therefore, obviously their view doesn't matter very much.

**J:** You were talking about airline competition which has freed up but has remained largely a duopoly, are you concerned about that?

**PM:** I think one of the things Australia has got from aviation, it has got lower prices but it has kept its companies intact - who have learned to be in a competitive environment. This idea that you need to smash companies up to deregulate, and have then, a whole multiplicity of companies which then eventually evaporate is the messy way the Americans went through deregulation. I think, the way we are doing it is far better for consumers, for safety and for airlines.

**J:** Do you welcome Mr Cowley's support for the privatisation of the Federal Airports Corporation?

**PM:** I'm not here to go around the world for sport, are there any other questions?

J: How do you think Mr Hewson will go as the policy conscience of the Liberal Party?

PM: The thing about the Liberal Party is, I think, it is irretrievably divided. And, it is no wonder they've got no policies because they run around, they spend all of their time fighting themselves. I mean, Alexander Downer, if he wants to look strong and command loyalty and respect - you do it by inducing it, you don't do it by petulantly striking people down. And, I think, what's going to happen here is that the sort of divisions that we've seen in the Liberal Party in the eighties are going to continue.

ends.