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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE DANDENONG RAILWAY STATION,
FRIDAY, 24 MARCH 1995**

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Distinguished colleagues - and we have many of them here today - Michael Duffy, of course, well known to everybody here as the Member for Holt and my colleague Gareth Evans, who before too much longer will be the Member for Holt. I mean it's a good thing for Senators getting out and meeting people, but he does it so well. And Rob Maclellan, Minister for Planning, Ian Cathie and Mrs Cathie, and distinguished guests, and Members of Parliament from both sides, and ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for a very nice welcome and most particularly to Worawa Aboriginal College. I met a group of Aboriginal people in Adelaide yesterday and the one thing I think, you can say about Mabo or the Land Fund, the Native Title and the rest of it, it has no doubt got us to the point where if not in the past most Australian people think when they see an Aboriginal dance group or Aboriginal people they say they are our people - our people. And it has made us one country and one nation, more than we've ever been and thank you very much for that welcome.

But you get all sorts of welcomes. I had a pretty mixed welcome yesterday in Adelaide. I was clutched and grabbed by admiring and devoted supporters in one place and attacked in others. And then I had Tim Fischer, of course, Tim was running around picking up the lines from some toffy little stringer for the BBC, bagging our Parliament and I said, I thought about saying, fair crack of the whip Tim, when it comes to the House of Commons, I mean, Tim still thinks a fishnet is for catching yabbies, of course. But for the rest of us, we now know and, of course, in our Parliament, we used to often wonder what a three line whip was in the House of Commons well, we all know about that these days.

At any rate, thank you very much for the welcome today and for coming to this, I think, very important event. Transport and intermodal transport is a key to modern living, particularly as the motor vehicles and with the capacity for the rail system to do new things and I was very interested in a couple of things that Alan said, most particularly, his point I think about Dandenong being, where once it was on the periphery of Melbourne, now being much more part of the centre of what will be this development out at Pakenham and Cranbourne and Berwick. And so we need here in Dandenong, and we see just behind us the Australian Taxation Office which has seen the decentralisation of the tax administration to the central place just as he made the point about Parramatta being in a similar position in Sydney which has these decentralised facilities, the Tax Office, the transport and what have you. This is going to be the case here. Under the Better Cities Program of the Commonwealth, it is a way of bringing and changing some of the gloom about urban decay and how we make urban areas better. Now Alan Brown said to me, this place, this railway was an armpit of a place. Now, that is very descriptive, I'll use that one in the House, Alan. Can I have that one? And it probably was because mostly I take my media etiquette from Jeff Kennett these days, but I'll take some of the lines from you.

But, the station and the capacity to do this, I think, shows that we in the Commonwealth believe that urban planning and urban problems or urban decay can be overcome by dealing with the three tiers of government - State and local - and to get something done which is good. To have a building like this which will not only be functional and efficient, but which is light and bright and airy and there are no dark corners where people could be molested and we have got something like 25 television monitors around the building so that it can be watched, there are people coming in and out of it all of the time.

I think urban renewal is critical to the happiness of most people. We talk about it a lot in the Federal government because 85 per cent of Australians live in cities and so to make life better for them is about making life more comfortable, more pleasant and to live in areas which are more beautiful. So, that is why the issues like the quality of life and peace of mind matter and it is why my colleague, Brian Howe, has been steward of this program *Better Cities* and why we have around the country and urban areas, such as Dandenong, been able to move towards improvements in areas which are getting beyond the capacity of State governments or local governments. So, this interchange is, I think, going to be an important one for the regeneration of transport in this area and it means that we can make public transport more competitive, more efficient and more likely to be chosen as the mode of daily movement than motor cars. Of course, with motor cars we are continuing to destroy a lot of urban areas with arterial roads and we all know the better the road the more cars that move on them. So, this is an important thing to be doing.

I must make a few remarks now about the design of this station and just thank the community for being part of the extensive public consultations about it and to the architects Hassall Pty Ltd/Forbes Fitzharding and the structural

engineers Ove Arup and Partners. They have done a great job marrying together function and technology into producing a new and important place for Dandenong.

This is a model of co-operation in what can be done with the State and Commonwealth governments together with local government as well and what we see as a consequence is in a very key part of the city of Melbourne, in this area of great growth, in this hub of Dandenong, we see this capacity to do something good. And, now with the recovery in full swing, with the job growth coming through strongly, with again where Dandenong has suffered quite substantially in terms of unemployment, we are starting to see that improve and see new businesses starting again and we can make some of these key centres core centres in our capital cities as is happening here with the Taxation Office, other state and commonwealth facilities in Dandenong and with this intermodal change to make it easier to go from rail to road to bus et cetera.

So, can I thank Ian Cathie and Alan Brown and Michael Duffy who has been involved with this project from the beginning and to those other members of the community who have been involved with it, this is quite a great and a good thing to be doing together in the city of Melbourne, in the city of Dandenong where I am very pleased to be on this very happy occasion. It is my pleasure now to join with Alan in unveiling this plaque.

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