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**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP  
DOORSTOP, CAIRNS INTERNATIONAL HOTEL, TUESDAY, 18 APRIL 1995**

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**PM:** When you are ready, I am basically here for you. You ask the questions and I'll answer them. I have a lunch to do, so we are not here forever, but we'll try to do our best for you.

**J:** ...(inaudible) ... Jobskills ...

**PM:** Well, what it is doing is taking the long term unemployed who without this sort of program would be forgotten by society and giving them a useful role in our lives - in work. In training - and bringing those skills to the labour market which are now becoming in short supply. And when skills get in short supply, say in building, building costs rise and you become uncompetitive. So, it is an efficient thing to do to get long term unemployed people back into the labour market and, of course, it is a humane and fair and decent thing to do as well. That is, this Government has said, I said after the election, we are not going to leave the unemployed behind. So, the Commonwealth labour market programs provide a jobs subsidy and training to get those people back to work and that is what we have seen today.

**J:** ... (inaudible) ... Mr Wilson intent on damaging Carmen Lawrence.

**PM:** Well, Mr Wilson said something today which I thought was very revealing. He said this issue is not capable of resolution. He said it will always be my word against others or others words against his. He admitted this was a meeting where no notes were taken by note takers. So, by Mr Wilson's own admission no inquiry can reveal more than his claim or Carmen Lawrence's counter-claim. And, I think, that is the point about this, it is just one of those hackneyed political issues. The reason it has been raised is to obscure the fact that the Western Australian Liberal Party is totally

divided. The Liberal Party is not a national party. It is a collection of state parties, but where it has a State Government in Western Australia which is important to it federally, they are hopelessly divided. Two of Mr Howard's supporters were defeated last week - that is Mr Rocher and Mr Filling - two of Mr Howard's closest supporters were defeated. Can I just say Mr Crichton-Browne still hasn't resigned as Acting President of the Senate. He is still today Acting President of the Senate. He is still on the salaries and emoluments of the Acting Presidency of the Senate. So, it shows you the utter contempt he and the Western Australian Liberal Party hold for Mr Howard, that he still hasn't resigned.

J: If Carmen Lawrence is right, why are you not willing to call an inquiry?

PM: But the question is why for? You don't have inquiries for nothing. This is essentially, I think, Mr Wilson's latest reference saying that he thinks this is incapable of resolution, it will always be his word against others. I just think the others have got a more credible case.

J: Do you think there is some justification for an inquiry then?

PM: No. Look, let me just say this. This is all noise and no substance. Now, what the Liberals think is, if they can have three or four days of noise, somehow that noise turns into substance. Noise, noise. Claim, claim. Newspaper headline, newspaper headline. It doesn't amount to anything unless there is some substance. So, the substance here, why are they running with it? Because of the divisions in the Western Australian branch. Why is that important? Because unless they get them resolved they have got nil chance of winning the next federal election. That is the issue here.

J: Why not prove it by holding an inquiry?

PM: Well, there would be no point for an inquiry. Why would the Commonwealth want to hold an inquiry? This is a matter in the State of Western Australia, what is it to do with the Commonwealth? Nothing what so ever.

J: So, do you think Mr Court should put his money where his mouth is?

PM: No, I think, Mr Court should basically, I mean Western Australians I think, are absolutely filled to the brim with inquiries. The West Australian people have had enough of inquiries. They had the Royal Commission running for years and I think no good is going to come from it. I mean, take the claimant. The claimant has said today, that is Mr Wilson, this matter is incapable of resolution. So, if he says it what is the point of any inquiry.

J: Are you confident the Government's wood chipping policy is adequate. You are going to face a protest in just a moment?

PM: Well, let me just say here. The Government's environment credentials are, I think, more than adequate. I mean, for a start just take Cairns. This Government put away the Daintree Rainforest for posterity. It is one of the great tourism assets of this city, of this region. In this last Budget, we put money away for a \$24 million scheme to buy back the hole in the heart of the Daintree. We have given Douglas Shire the money to put the road through, a sealed road up to the Daintree. In the last year, we put away for posterity Shoalwater Bay near Rockhampton. In the last year Jervis Bay of the coast of NSW and we have also said that we are reserving 264 coupes for further examination for a representative forest system. Last year it was 17 coupes. This year it is 264 and I have said that we will be cutting the exports of wood chips down by 20 per cent a year from 8 million to 5 million to 4 million et cetera. And we have just succeeded in getting Tasmania to sign for the first time, the National Forest Policy Statement. So, it is only Labor that is going to have the solution to set up representative reserve systems under Regional Forest Agreements to look after the native forests of this country. It will take a while for that to get through, but people will understand that. The only party capable of delivering on the environment is the Federal Labor Party.

J: Just with Jobskills, ACOSS has concerns you are going to be cutting back on funding ...

PM: Well, look, that is only a Budget question. Budget questions are best answered on Budget night.

J: You can't give any reassurances?

PM: Well, the reassurance is I said at the election we will not leave the unemployed behind and we set up a \$1.6 billion scheme called Working Nation to support them. And it is that which we were doing here today. So, the proof of the pudding, I think, is in the eating. Thank you.

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