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## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
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AS: Prime Minister, many people are saying it's a great coup for Australia to have this Global Cultural Diversity Conference here in Sydney - why is that?

PM: Perhaps it's some recognition of the success we have had with cultural diversity ourselves, in what we call multiculturalism. That is, the mores and tenets of our multiculturalism - of our own democracy here - as it has developed. I think that the fact that the conference is here - important as the conference is in its own right - the fact that it is here, pays us a compliment.

AS: There is a sense in which global diversity, and managing cultural diversity, is particularly important in the world at the moment - do you think Australia has something to say about how to achieve that?

PM: I think we have, and as I said in my remarks, I don't think there is any single template here. You can't take the Australian experience and put it somewhere else, but the interesting thing is, though, after the Cold War - when what is called the "bi-polar tension" - the two camp tension which held everything else tight - where community differences, ethnic differences, racial differences, religious differences were suppressed. Now that tension has gone, they are coming out. And, so rather than the United Nations, for instance - or the rest of us - being involved managing trouble spots - which are the manifestation of the tension - what this conference is about is dealing with the tension at its source. That is, what is causing these things. And if you see quite large problems - look at Rwanda in the last week as a very express cause of these tensions - yet the underlying tensions are well understood - culturally well understood - in that country. So, I think what we are about here is saying "well, in this

country of Australia, we have handled various...what would otherwise be various racial and religious tensions well". And probably one of the reasons we have, is that we have a very great sense of democracy - a deep sense of democracy - that our sense of democracy gives every person space - ethnic space, religious space, political space - and that tolerance lets it all work.

AS: Well, that sense of democracy was very much on show today of course - we had almost as many people outside the Conference protesting about Macedonia, Bosnia and other issues, as we did have inside listening to the speeches - does that suggest that in some areas there is still some tension to be resolved?

PM: There will always be tensions, but you made the point yourself - it's the sort that is par for the course - they are out the front having their say. And that itself is an expression of the very democratic values that make Australia work. And you notice that the Secretary-General in his speech talked about inculcation of the values of democracy. Not the models - not the models where you have a parliamentary system or a presidential system - not the models, but the values.

AS: Okay - if we talk about the tensions, there is one group I wanted to talk about briefly. It seems there are still, albeit a small group, but there are some Australians who would feel excluded by the multicultural process - who would feel, rightly or wrongly, that they are not part of it, and they feel rejected by it - and that shows itself in some of the more radical right-wing groups that demonstrate - we have seen problems overseas, most recently with the bombing in Oklahoma. Do you think that Australia can afford to ignore this group of disaffected people who we can see - we saw in Adelaide over the weekend, National Action people -who have a problem with the whole nature of our society?

PM: I don't think we can ignore them, and I think we wish that these people are affected by the ambient attitudes of Australia - the ambient societal attitudes. That is what the remedy...that is what the antidote is to these sorts of things - it's not the Government's security forces crawling over them, or in them, but rather that they know that their message, essentially, is not to be generally accepted. But if the cause of the disaffection is some neglect by the rest us, is some insensitivity by the rest of us, well, that is something we should correct.

AS: Sure.

PM: But often these things are racist, intolerant - in the case of Oklahoma, criminal - so no multicultural policy is going to deal with that.

- AS: Lets finish with a couple of brief, practical questions. You talked about the need to include the Aboriginal community in this society through the Social Justice package being an important part of reconciliation - how is the Government going to deliver on a Social Justice package of that sense of proportion, at the same time as you have committed over the next few years, to cutting back your own budget, and your own discretionary spending, as much as you possibly can?
- PM: I don't think this is about money - this is about rights. It's not about money.
- AS: But at the end of the day it must come with a price?
- PM: The bit that comes with a heavy price is land, and that is already factored in. That's Mabo and the Land Fund, and what we will now be spending on health - but a large part of that has been factored in - and community services, but the rest of the Social Justice things are about rights. They are not necessarily carrying a price ticket on them. So, I don't think money is the problem in all this - it's just a matter of getting it right, and trying to move both the debate and the modalities of social justice for indigenous people - moving it forward so that there is no more disappointment of one move forward and then slippage. But to move it forward with certitude.
- AS: Sure.
- PM: That's the challenge - it's not really money.
- AS: Okay. Final question - the republic has been a big part of the Keating Government's issue of identity for Australia coming together. When you went to Germany, the indications were then that we expected to see the Government's response on a republic in a few weeks - still not there, how soon are we going to see that fairly important plank?
- PM: You will be seeing it, and not so far away, but it is....the key thing is though is that it is central to the fabric of Australia - to its society. You can't get around as an independent nation when the Head of State belongs somewhere else, and that should be pretty self-evident to anybody. And the second thing is, it is central economically that...I mean, there is a sense about Australia now where people feel good about the country, they feel up-beat about the country, they feel confidence, they feel as though there is something special happening here - they are moving forward with a sense of identity. What the republic does is make that identity clear - it puts the seal on that identity. Because you can't get

around the world borrowing the Head of State of another country. I think that is the important thing - my opponents say "this is a distraction". Well, the ones who say that don't understand what it really means, and if they don't understand, then they are not entitled to run the rest of us.

AS: Prime Minister, thanks for your time.

PM: Thank you.

ends.