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# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
INTERVIEW ON RADIO 5AN WITH KEITH CONLON, ADELAIDE  
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## **E&OE PROOF COPY**

**KC:** Prime Minister, Paul Keating, good morning.

**PM:** How are you Keith?

**KC:** Good thanks - what's the last station you passed, Prime Minister?

**PM:** We just got on at Belair...

**KC:** He's just checking now to see what's coming up, I guess.

**PM:** Blackwood was the last one.

**KC:** Okay - you are well on your way. You are well on your way to Eden Hills. Are you actually doing a Ben Chifley...

**PM:** Yes - I'm at the wheel here. (*Toot toot*). You can hear it.

**KC:** Was that you blowing the whistle?

**PM:** That was me. Whistle blowing Prime Minister, you see.

**KC:** Absolutely. Tell me, did you take some tips from Tom Hopkins - the 103 year old train driver that surely you met, from Adelaide, in Melbourne?

**PM:** That was his great dream, you see. He said it was the great dream of all railway people to see the country united with a single gauge. And this link - this is one of the key things in *One Nation* - was to build this link between Melbourne and Adelaide, to pull Adelaide and South Australia more...to bind it in further with the Eastern States, and I think

that's what it will do. And it's quite a thrill to come and see this track sitting beside the wide gauge - the standard gauge being more narrow. You can see it obviously out of the window here.

KC: Yes. What sort of cost savings do you think it will represent eventually, Prime Minister?

PM: I think it does tremendous things for costs, in terms of containers. But the main thing is mobility - it will really mean that say, the port of Adelaide will be able to compete with the port of Melbourne. Ships can dock here, then load up on the train and move them to Melbourne and Sydney quickly, and it will change the nature of South Australia as the transport hub, and it gives South Australian industry...we're going through a tunnel here Keith - just a sec.....

KC: The noise level has gone up. The Prime Minister is going through the first of the tunnels on the way down, and we have lost him completely of course, because we are in the middle of the tunnel.

PM: Are you there?

KC: You're out again?

PM: Yeah - we're out again. It gives South Australian industry a great chance to do things that bring products into Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and of course, to go across to the West. So that whole trans-continental traffic of goods, and particularly containers, will be now - for the first time ever - routed through Adelaide and Melbourne; Melbourne via Adelaide.

KC: Talking about that transport hub, Mr Keating, surely you are going to get a question or two about the Alice Springs to Darwin extension - any further interest in that?

PM: I'm not sure that this is in South Australia's interests because - we have just gone through Eden Hills station, just one second (*toot toot*).....

KC: The Prime Minister is just waving to...you have got the whole of Eden Hills Primary School out there?

PM: They're right here - excuse me a sec...

KC: Righto. We'll just let the Prime Minister attend to some formal waving duties now, as he goes past the Eden Hills Railway Station.

PM: The Northern Territory have been talking about taking the line to Broken Hill, and then to Sydney, which of course would see the whole of the traffic by-passing South Australia. I think South Australia, with

this change, is in the box seat. I don't really know why people believe that if we build a line up to Darwin, it will help Adelaide and South Australia. All it would simply do - even if it routes through South Australia - is take the traffic to Melbourne, not coming through Adelaide. But if it goes via Broken Hill, you won't even see it. And why would somebody on a ship take a container to Adelaide, and then take it by rail to Melbourne, if they could drop it at Darwin?

**KC:** Yes. Let's take a look at the next leap Prime Minister, because it has been a huge leap to get the standard line in. But as well as that, people in the transport game are grappling with this huge leap forward of seeing private freight trains - how soon so you think that will be?

**PM:** Our idea - Laurie Brereton is on the train with me this morning - our idea is to set the track up, and call it the Track Australia. The track will be owned by a company, and the railway locomotive.....we're just about to go through another tunnel in a sec, Keith...

**KC:** Thanks very much Prime Minister...

**PM:** The loco's will be owned by somebody else.

**KC:** This is a longer tunnel, so we will hang on while you go in - yep, he's gone. He's in the long tunnel now, and in a moment he will come out at Sleeps Hill - that's naturally out towards the plain. Hello - oh blimey, we have lost him. We will try and get, by the way, because he is in a very long tunnel at the moment, and it will take a second or two. We'll take news headlines, and see if we can get to the Prime Minister, who is shortly to come through Clapham on that first standard rail freight train.

(news headlines)

**KC:** On the train and out of the tunnel, Prime Minister Paul Keating, welcome back.

**PM:** Well, the city has just come into view. It looks marvellous.

**KC:** You would be heading towards Lynton Station and then next Clapham and you will really be on the suburban run now.

**PM:** We have got one coming up now. There is a crossing so we have got to blow the horn (toot, toot) to make sure that nobody is on it and there is a few people on the station and you are exactly right, it is Lynton station.

**KC:** Can I just ask about the passenger head office, Prime Minister, there is now, of course, a national passenger system that you can get on now,

the Indian Pacific and so on. Is there a chance Adelaide might be the headquarters for that?

- PM: I think that is a possibility. I think, we can do a lot with the passengers across the country, but just before we went into the tunnel, we were talking about Track Australia and, I think, people need to understand this. It is a very important concept. The track is owned by a single company and the company's business will be to keep the track going and then the railway operators - National Rail, TNT, or Brambles - or whoever wants to move freight can then hire a loco and pull freight around the country on the track. So, the track is separated from the railway companies, so we get competition in rail and the railway companies and, I think, this would really give us a very good track, an even better track than we have got today, straighter, faster, better maintained, and I think that would do a great deal for South Australia.
- KC: Rail 2000, which is a group here very interested in the future of rail, wants more money put in. They say One Nation has been fantastic, but of course, that has come to the end now and it wants to see a continuing commitment to the rail network. Are you, in effect, giving that via this new idea?
- PM: I think so. That is why you get investment money back into the track and, of course, as you know we have had so many deaths on the road by these big container trucks carrying containers when many of them should have been carried on rail, but the track has been so poor and, of course, between Melbourne and Adelaide you had to change bogies. We have had poor routing's, poor construction often in the first place, and then no maintenance for 20 or 30 years. So, the rail system has gone into disrepair over the last 30 or 40 years and I am pleased this government has been able to bring it back to life.
- KC: Prime Minister, you are going to get a lot more waving that you'll have to do as you go through these suburban stations. Where are you now?
- PM: We are just coming down to a crossing. We went through Lynton and we are just at a road crossing. Just one second.
- KC: That sounds like Mitchim coming up.
- PM: Yes, we are just at Mitchim
- KC: OK, Prime Minister, thanks very much for your time today. We will let you get back to the driving duties. Is this the fulfilment of a lifetime ambition?
- PM: Well, Labor Governments are great building governments. People are saying 'are we having an election?' Well, I'd rather build a railway

around Australia than have an election, frankly. Get the job done, get the job over and a couple of weeks ago Keith, talking to you, I had the pleasure of talking about and announcing the road through the Adelaide Hills and I drove up on it today through that Devil's Elbow, straightening all that out, extending the airport and giving international carriage of passengers in here. So, we will end up, I think, having a much better linkage to South Australia - by air, by road and by rail.

KC: Much appreciate your time today. Thanks for taking the call on the train. (toot, toot). What a suitable way to go out, with another blast of the freight train whistle.

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