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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP, AND
THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON LAURIE BRERETON MP
DOORSTOP, ADELAIDE FREIGHT TERMINAL, ADELAIDE, 5 JUNE 1995**

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J: Prime Minister there is a concern locally about the future of Australian National and the fact that up to 200 jobs may go later this year. Can I get a comment on this?

PM: Oh well I think the Minister for Transport could probably do more justice to it than me. But the Commonwealth commitment to AN has been, I think, pretty profound. Our commitment to railways is a key thing. Don't look at what we say, look at what we do and what we have done is to give new life back to the Australian railway system and our belief that rail is the answer for carrying these big containers across the continent, around the place, means that we are going to improve the quality and durability and longevity of the rail system. That must mean a longer run, better employment, more secure employment. I don't know whether Laurie would like to add to that.

LB: I think the most profound aspect of the weekend's announcement was the decision of the Cabinet to back the development of Track Australia, which is aimed at doing one thing and that is growing rail, making it more competitive. But, in total, making it bigger and better and that means more jobs overall and that is certainly the commitment that we have given and it is certainly the plan we are going to develop and work through with the States during the remainder of this year. That is good news for AN and particularly good news for South Australia.

J: Prime Minister does this mean that the Alice Springs/Darwin rail link ...?

PM: Well that is subject to a study and that has got to stand or fall on its commerciality and the independence of that commerciality. But what we are seeing here today is the tangible step of putting a standard gauge between Adelaide and Melbourne. That means that the port of Adelaide can ship containers through to the port of Melbourne and Sydney and

into businesses right around the country and it also means that the heavier industries of South Australia will have better transport linkages into Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, as well as to Perth, and this must be good for the industry of this State. The other thing which I think is good is the psychology of it. To think that South Australia is connected up now by a line which is a standard gauge, so where we can now get the efficiency of the system up, has got to be good for this State and got to bring more services to Adelaide.

J: (inaudible)

PM: Well Track Australia has got to be negotiated with the other States. They have got a substantial interest with their rail systems. But, again, there has been such a decline in rail investment in the last 30 years ... unless we have a company its fundamental job is to run the permanent way, the track, if there is a good track we will get plenty of railway companies.

J: Say in six months?

PM: Oh, I don't know. I think these things take a while but I would think in that time we would make considerable progress.

J: Mr Keating you have overtaken Mr Howard in the polls. Is that a case of the hard sell?

PM: It is not the hard sell, it is the hard do. The hard do. I mean that is the economy is growing. It wasn't five minutes of sunshine. That was just a cynical advertising line, from an ad agency, that they put in Mr Howard's mouth. We have got a sustainable growth economy, we have got 630,000 jobs since the election and One Nation did get the country moving. The One Nation program did get the country back to growth and back to employment. Here, in rail, you can see it behind us with this standard gauge. You can see it now in the removal of the distinction between domestic and international carriage of air passengers. You can see it in the rebuilding of the TAFE system, of the Australian National Training Authority. These are all the quality things that are done by Governments who do things. I mean Mr Howard's problem is he did nothing as Treasurer and nothing as Opposition Leader and the problem is if you are in the do nothing category, it is hard to polish yourself up as a doer.

J: So you have always believed that you would overtake Mr Howard in the polls?

PM: Good policy and doers always end up with their nose in front.

J: And what about interest rates then. What can we expect there?

PM: Well the guide to that is inflation and we had the really good news out in the National Accounts last week. The broadest measure of inflation, the non-farm product measure, was 1.9 per cent. The consumption measure was 2.2 per cent. There is your guide to how interest rates are going to be. I mean what we have done is broken the back of Australian inflation. That has been done by a Labor Government.

J: Prime Minister is our move toward a Republic as on track as the railway?

PM: - Well it will be very, I think, nicely on track on Wednesday night. Whether it is on standard gauge, one will have to wait and see. But I think it will be.

J: And the racial vilification legislation?

PM: We will be proceeding with that and it is up for Mr Howard to explain to the rest of the community why he believes that minorities don't have the right to protection.

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