



**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP  
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**J:** How concerning is it to the Federal Government to have such a swing against Labor?

**PM:** It concerns me when there is a swing against Labor anywhere and, I think, what is concerning in Queensland, this Queensland government of Wayne Goss is a good government and it is rather disconcerting to see a good government in any way suffering these sorts of problems from a protest vote. It is quite obvious that the Opposition here without policies and without a program urging only a protest vote, there could have been no positive vote for them. In which case, there has got to be some appraisal of again the point, that political parties must stand for something and when they don't there can be no guarantee for the community that they are going to get some value from it - from such a protest or from such a change.

**J:** You have made your own assessment here, what does this mean federally?

**PM:** By and large state elections over the last 20 or 30 years have not had a federal character about them and vice versa, I think this is true. The Coalition lost in NSW, I don't think we were able to say that this is a major turn around in federal fortunes anymore than I'd say a loss of seats in Queensland would be a rebuke for the Federal Labor Party and, I think, John Howard said the same thing a week or two ago here in Queensland. But, you don't like to see your party - in this case the Labor Party, my Party - suffering admonition at the hands of the electorate and particularly with a good, competent government as Wayne Goss' government is.

**J:** Mr Goss says that on these figures the federal government would lose in Queensland and federally.

- PM: Well, we have had so many examples, take the 1975 federal election loss of Labor. Neville Wran won in NSW a couple of months later and vice versa. I don't think you can read any sorts of, these sorts of federal implications into the result, but that is not to say that as a Labor person, as a Labor leader I am not concerned about it.
- J: Do you think a federal election is likely to be later rather than sooner?
- PM: I keep getting asked by journalists about election dates. John Hewson started talking about an early election 18 months ago. We still haven't had an election. I still keep saying I believe the public should get value from these parliaments and that it is too hard to win elections to be giving any free time away.
- J: So, is that a postponement?
- PM: No, it is just the Prime Minister of this country exercising the sensible prerogatives that are vested with the Prime Minister to make the election timing a matter of the Prime Minister's choice.
- J: Have you spoken to Mr Goss?
- PM: I did. I rang Wayne this morning at about eleven o'clock and I had quite a long talk to him. This result is in the box now, it will be revealed, of course, when the final counting comes due. It is my very fervent wish that the Goss government is retained in office and that people may see; yes, you can register a protest vote, but it doesn't necessarily get you any value.
- J: Could this, in fact, be good for federal Labor because the people in Queensland would have got their protest vote off their chests?
- PM: Again, you have to then think it is a vote for one party or another. I don't really think it is. People do vote on state issues and they do vote on federal issues, so I don't ever believe that a loss for the Labor Party anywhere can be good for us.
- J: Are you relieved that you weren't directly involved in this campaign?
- PM: This is the fashion of a media which is oversupplied by cameras and journalists and under supplied by issues. People are always asking all these questions. It is like the old days. Did Bob Menzies campaign for Henry Bolte? No. Did he campaign for Robin Askin? No. Did Bolte and Askin campaign for Menzies? No. Did Malcolm Fraser campaign for Dick Hamer? No. This is all a bit of mythology basically.
- J: If Goss loses here, would you welcome him into federal politics?

PM: I think he will win and I hope it will be a reasonably clear result in the end. Let's talk about that scenario.

J: What do you think of the performance though of the Queensland government?

PM: I look at the performance of the Queensland government, I mean, this has been a State which has been growing in the order of somewhere between four and six per cent over the last couple of years. This is a State which has got very strong employment growth - one of the strongest in Australia. This State has been along with Western Australia, out performing the other States. There has been, I think, a substantial change in Queensland. Queensland is a much more national and internationally oriented State now than it has ever been in my view, thanks to the Goss government and it was for these reasons, I think, the government should be returned.

J: So, what does it say about their campaign?

PM Well, what does it say about the Coalition's campaign? It is that sort of register a vote of protest against the Government. Don't register it for any reason, don't register it because we - the Opposition - are better, but just register it. I think it is going to make people think about whether protest votes have got any value to them. There is no prize for hurting a good government.

J: Is there a risk for you that the same will happen at a federal election?

PM: Well, there is always a risk, but again, let people understand this about John Howard. He is following the same policy, he is running around without a policy. He is saying 'I'll have no policies, just concentrate on them'. But, in the end, someone has got to run the country so as I say, there can be no honesty or credibility in politics without policies. So, I think, what the media has got to do with John Howard is line him up. Say 'OK John, you want to be Prime Minister, what do you stand for?' Not some vague generalisation. He has got another one of these so called headland speeches coming up during the week - it will be the same as the last one - full of vague generalisations. And, if he wants to be Prime Minister, he has got to say where he stands in policy. When I produce a policy document it has got the changes there, all the details. They are there whether it is the Accord of a couple of weeks ago or whether it is the outline of the Republic or whether it is the Budget or superannuation for the whole workforce. It is there - in quality, in detail. And I think free riders on the system and whether you are talking about Borbidge or Howard, essentially they are free riders on the system. They are to be held accountable for the things they really stand for, but want to keep hidden until an election.

J: Do you think Howard will fashion his campaign on the Queensland Coalition?

PM: I think the policy has been the same. They represent nothing. They stand for nothing and yet they seek to denigrate governments that do things. I think, the public ought to be very careful about this and say well, hang on, before we leave value behind, before we leave behind governments that have got quality and substance and value, we have got to know what we are going to get in return and not just, basically, the fluff that comes from an advertising agency.

J: You said after the ACT elections that you have taken a message from the electorate. Do you take a message from this electorate?

PM: That was a federal by-election. This is a state election. The only message I take from this is that Labor has not done here as well as we would have liked and I am interested for the Labor Party and, of course, for the federal government that we try to understand the Queensland outcome and see if there is a discernible view from the electorate.

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