



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP, AND  
THE MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS, THE HON CON SCIACCA MP  
AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS SPECIAL, SEVEN NETWORK, TOWNSVILLE,  
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**ROD HENSHAW:** Let's go back to Con in Townsville. Con Sciacca - you also have a very interesting and very special guest for us this afternoon?

**CON SCIACCA:** I do Rod. probably my chiefest backer in this whole program has been the prime Minister Paul Keating, welcome Prime Minister, I guess you'd have a certain amount of interest in this, there's no doubt about that. Don't you agree that we really did need to do something on this very special year?

**PAUL KEATING:** I think so con. This was too significant a commitment, the losses were too great, for it not to mean something 50 years later, the community action of this kind, which Australians had never seen the likes of before, and as I said the commitment was too great, was not something to simply be left to contemporary memory, but now the opportunity was ours, half a century later, to tell Australians about the Pacific War, to lift it in our history, to understand that this was the fight to save Australia, and Australia was saved, liberties were kept, our way of life we created here was maintained, and that we owe it all to those people who did that, to keep going.

**ROD HENSHAW:** Prime Minister, Thanks very much for joining us on the program this afternoon. Like me you were born after the war, but had you taken a personal interest in Australia's involvement to such an extent, before the Australia Remembers juggernaut got going.

**PAUL KEATING:** Yes, I've made it one of the - quite interestingly in my Prime Ministership which started at the end of December 1991, it started just before the 50th Anniversary and the fall of Singapore, in 1942, so through this period, 1992 to 1995, I really had the opportunity to span the war years, shadowed by 50 years. So when I went to Kokoda in Papua New Guinea in 1992, and then to Hell Fire Pass in Thailand, and Kanchanaburi, to various other sites around Asia, I wanted to use the opportunity to bring home the lesson of the Pacific War which was not really as well understood in Australian History, as the First World War, yet this was the war that saved Australia. And you may also know that one of my own family died in one of the death marches from Sandakan to Ranau in North Borneo, and I was aware of that, I was aware of all of that prisoner of war, the prisoner of war saga of Australia even when I was a child and so these things have been in my mind but overwhelmingly what's in my mind is to teach younger Australians, this generation of Australians that we owe a debt to the generation, that heroic generation, that fought and saved Australia, and to understand that this was the battle for Australia. While we had allied obligations in the First World War, it did not involve the defence of Australia, this happened in the Second World War and it's why I have as Con said, been a strong supporter of his, and of Australia Remembers because this was the opportunity to bring it together with Victory in the Pacific. the commemoration 50 years on.

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