



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
INTERVIEW WITH RAY MARTIN, A CURRENT AFFAIR, AUSTRALIA
REMEMBERS, 15 AUGUST 1995**

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RM: Prime Minister, thanks for your time.

PM: Good Ray.

RM: Were children, Australian children a deliberate target of this Australia Remembers campaign?

PM: I think the whole nation was, but we had hoped that young Australians most appreciated it too because while we now look at the diggers on Anzac Day or today and we see people 60 or 70 years of age, there is always the impression of thinking about them. But, it was them as young people. It was them in their teens and their twenties. And so, the young Australians of today are, in some respects, entitled to picture themselves in that picture. So, if we can't make the linkage to them, in a sense we are failing in the remembrance.

RM: Yes. Some of them said to us today when they saw the veterans marching today that they felt like crying and some cried. Have you felt like crying?

PM: Yes, absolutely. But, I was most touched at Kokoda, as I was saying earlier today, that there is a little green square at Kokoda where the mists were, the morning tropical mists and as it rose young Australians of 18 years of age in shorts and singlets fought the best crack troops that the Japanese Imperial Army could throw at them and there the defence of Australia began in the hands of 18 year olds. These are the images, I think, which do bring you to tears.

RM: The vets have said to me over the last couple of days when we have talked to them that the image that they recall most, that they have loved the most, has been children waving to them on the train with balloons.

PM: Yes because it was about, you had to have this view of Australia, your belief in Australia to fight the fight. It had to be about your family and the children and so the sentiments for which they fought and died are the very same things which are ringing a bell with them now. I mean, seeing young people interested in it and thanking them for it is very sentimental for them.

RM: Yes, but I would have thought there was a generation gap especially with the younger people who are 10 or 12 or 14, but clearly there hasn't. This has brought them together.

PM: Yes, I hope that the whole series of remembrances and ceremonies has brought into sharp focus what it means and we need to make the point because our troubles all started in this century in 1914 in Sarajevo and here we are in 1995 in Sarajevo.

RM: It is a terrible irony isn't it?

PM: And it means that we can never be sanguine about liberty or democracy and that we always need to guard it and value it and understand how it has been protected.

RM: A very quick question, have the Japanese now apologised, do you accept the Prime Minister's statement as an apology?

PM: I think it is a very comprehensive apology and the most pleasing element to it is his sentiment that he wishes to tell the younger generation of Japanese people about the mistake in policies of the past and to go the international way of peace and freedom and not misplaced nationalism. These are sentiments I have not heard from a Japanese head of government before.

RM: Strong enough for you?

PM: Yes, some will say in Australia, well it should have come from the Diet or somewhere else, but Mr Murayama is the Prime Minister of Japan and he speaks for the nation of Japan. It is a very comprehensive statement.

RM: Thanks for your time, have a good night.

PM: Thank you Ray.

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