



## **PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH FOR THE LAUNCH OF "COMING CLEAN, A BIOGRAPHY OF IAN  
KIERNAN", THE BATHERS PAVILION, BALMORAL, SYDNEY  
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### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

I was at a function about a year ago - it was the presentation of the Australian Artists Creative Fellowships, and John Olsen - the great Australian artist - I was giving him a gift, or a prize, or a fellowship, I can't remember, and he said "well, there are only two kinds", he said, "of Australians". He said "there are lovers, and others". I mean, we often think of the others, don't we? And Manning Clark - he put it another way - talked about the enlargers and the straiteners - the people who could always see something bigger, and those who said get your head down, be serious, grind away, conform - stay in the groove. And this has always been the great divider in Australian life - and also, may I say, in Australian politics. And the reason that I am here today is to say something nice about an enlarger, a lover, a person who has belief and imagination - who believes in things, and imagines better things, and goes out and does them. And I am very pleased to have the opportunity, and as I read through the book - it is a very blokey book, there is no doubt about that, but what an interesting bloke. A quintessential Sydney larrikin - crazy-brave, self-contained - anyone who does an around the world solo voyage has enormous inner confidence and self-esteem. And this is a very complete person - he may represent himself as a fellow who rode around on motorbikes, and lost a \$20 million property empire, who sailed around the world and did all these sort of things, but he is a very complete individual, and I think that's why we are all here.

And the thing we celebrate is the fact - not simply his personality and his verve, and his courage - but the fact that a lot of Australians have seen in him some of themselves. And Clean Up Australia is the classic piece of community action - I mean, just last week we were talking about the celebration of a victory - a great community victory - in the Second World War. A commemoration of those who have lost. And you can think through all the events, and the ones that strike

your heart are the ones that mean something are the community ones - the ones that have got real weight in them, where we have come together to do things. And I think Ian pricking the consciousness of Australians about the environment, and also showing some of his own personality in the doing of it, many Australians have recognised in him some of the good things they see about themselves. And the aspirations they have to do things together. I think that is why he has become important to us, and why what he has done with the environment has been important. It is the same with Fred Hollows - it wasn't that long ago that nobody knew of Fred Hollows - but when people got a view of him, to see how selflessly he had given of his time, of the larrikin spirit, but the commitment to people - there was again that point of identification. And I think that's what we are really celebrating today. It's not the writing, or the outrageous story - and it is a sort of outrageous story.

I mean, of course, it is a quintessential Sydney-siders book. This couldn't have been written by somebody from Victoria. Because it's partly, you know, you can read the bits through it - I mean for instance, he loves the sea. I mean, if you stand here and look out, how could you not love the sea? How could you not love those headlands, which are - I mean, they are bit pock-marked by development - but by and large - they are really as it would have been before we all turned up in 1788. And, you know, I remember as a boy myself - a mate of mine used to ring me whenever there was a really big storm on the Harbour, we would catch the Manly ferry - we would be the only two on it. And you would get in the dip over here, and the waves would slosh right through out to the other side, you know - you would be going for the ride, just to enjoy it. And out there on the city harbour, sailing on weekends, one of my stunts was that I used to get the train from Bankstown to Circular Quay, get in my gear, and then I would jump off the back of the ferry, and the boat would pick me up. And of course they would yell out "man overboard", and they would say "oh, it's all right - he has been rescued". Sailing up to Pittwater - what a beautiful place that is, the Hawkesbury River. And there is all this sense of Sydney, and the water, and we are sort of drawn to it. You know, you get this impression - I know Ian has all his life, you can tell by the book - everything about him is completely salty, you know.

And also his interest in the built environment - very interesting when the worst of the packing-case architecture was being built, every good was being smashed, he was out there trying to preserve the terraces in Woolloomooloo. I used to do the Max Dupain pilgrimage when I was a boy, around all of Max's sites - you know, Lyndhurst at Glebe, or Tusculum up at Kings Cross, or the great Elizabeth Bay house, or all of the not so remarkable terraces, all the bits and pieces. You know, you saw the greater view of people - you had a sense that we might not have the architectural heritage of the United States, but what we have, we ought to try and lift it. And if not lift it, keep it - keep those parts that we did have. And so, you know, we see him in here being interested in this, and this is a very

interesting minds-eye picture of someone who was interested in Sydney at that time, when really, nobody cared about these things - a lot of the stuff was smashed up during this period. So he is building those, and in the sense of this very successful restaurant - which is here, I mean it could have failed of course, and no doubt the restaurateur has made a success of it, but it is hard not to with the view, and the place, and everything else. But he saw the opportunity.

And I think all of this has been about...the concern about the environment has been in him, somewhat perhaps latently before his experience in the Sargasso Sea, or in Hawaii in the Clean Ups, but he has seen the great marvellous opportunity that we have been given as Australians to have bequeathed to us this ancient continent. I mean, how could we have been so lucky? That just 200 years ago - I mean, we are now in our 50s, 4 times our lifetime - there were no Europeans here. The Aboriginal community in this country has preserved - for the rest of us - a continent. And we have a great duty to it, to understand what we have been given, and to understand that we have to protect it, and that we may hold here something unique in the world. Because I think our consciousness about it is now such that we will take the steps to hang onto it, and to make sure that the style of life we have, and our respect for the land, is that which may have the equal in the world, but none better. Now, Ian has brought that consciousness up in the Clean Up campaigns of Sydney Harbour, and then of course, Clean Up Australia - the hundreds of cities and provincial towns, the thousands of people that have been involved, lifting their environmental consciousness. And that is really lifting the sub-conscious on the greater environmental issues - he is right when he said earlier that the environment will win out. It is the political issue that won't be put asunder. No amount of smarmy political talk is going to put it down, because if for no other reason, our children know better than perhaps we have ever known about it. They know what a great and valuable thing it is.

So, this I think - this coalescence of the community view which Ian has brought there, through his own essential goodness and view about the country - is why we celebrate his book today. I mean, some of the other things in the book are terrific reading - when he went around Cape Horn and he said that he could barely see the light, but he got up and had a drink. And he mentioned that he thought about a few people, but he said something about being a bit shaky - it was all a bit shaky. Well, I would be a bit shaky going around Cape Horn. I mean, to even make a commentary on the light. I mean, the book is really a bit of a thriller in its own way, but there are some funny lines - he said "oh, I thought I should have cleaned up the boat because people would think that I was such a grubby bastard". You know, that sort of self-deprecation gives us again another indication of his personality, and his - essentially - humility. People who do things are...it doesn't necessarily mean that they are not humble, but I have always thought about Ian that there is a humility about him. But there is a crucible in there too - there is a reactor in there, throwing up ideas - you can see

in his own commitment to move into another phase of his life after , if you like, this book, to go on to the next phase. I mean, I like to think maybe it is just a case of beating your own drum about the baby-boom generation, but by God, we had a lot of go in us, I have got to say. We had a lot of - I'm not too sure how to say it - "chutzpah". I'm not too sure how it comes out, but there was a lot of go. And I think he is a classic baby-boomer - I mean, he is out there...maybe a bit earlier than that, maybe you just crept into that category Ian, I don't know. But one thing is for sure - as a generation, they have made a huge impact on Australia. And the other thing is, they have a great belief in Australia, and the Australian nation as an independent country, as an independent culture, as a force of our own that deserves the support.

So I am here with the very pleasant duty of launching the book, to pay a compliment to Phil (Jarratt) for joining Ian in writing it - he has this pattern of (Phil, I am saying) of finding people worth bothering with, and writing about them or helping them to write their story, and these are important parts of the Australian story, and we will always be in his debt for that. To the publishers - James (Fraser) - for taking a chance on a blokey book, but most particularly, we are here to celebrate - in a sense - the recording of an interesting Australian life. To say how much it has meant to the rest of us, that this life has brought together a sense of community around this question of the continent, and the landscape, but somebody who is a quintessential Australian - who believes in this country, and who loves it, and who wants to dream the big dreams, and do the big things. As I say, it's the belief and the imagination which has brought us to his restaurant of 20 years ago. Congratulations Ian - it is a pleasure to launch the book, and I am very happy to be associated with it, and with you. Thank you.

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