



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH AT A RECEPTION FOR THE AUSTRALIAN NETBALL TEAM,  
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, 29 AUGUST 1995**

## **E&OE PROOF COPY**

Well thank you very much, Kirsten [Wheeler], Michelle [Fielke], Jill [McIntosh], members of the successful team and ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here with John [Faulkner] on this occasion to be able to say congratulations and thank you to Michelle and the team for a great Australian victory. A great victory, out there, against the rest of the world, to demonstrate on two consecutive occasions that it wasn't something that just was a flash in the pan, that you could keep it up. And that in what was a most unusual - as you say, won by one on two occasions - a most unlikely outcome. And then, of course, that final win which was, of course, a very strong and convincing one.

I am very pleased for you all as a team, but particularly as individuals, to be given this opportunity to be out there to actually have that win and for Australians to share with you the joy of that victory. I was delighted for you and for all the people interested in netball, yesterday, to see the reception that you received.

I think it has meant a lot to everybody in this country. We have always had such tremendously strong women in sport. It has been a part of our great sporting tradition and keeping it up, out there, where now of course the competition is always so fierce and the training is so much better than years ago, it is so much harder to do it.

I am delighted that the Institute of Sport has been able to play a role because in the 1980s when we were cutting Government expenditure - and I used to sit in the Expenditure Review Committee night in, night out. We cut many things, but always put money into sport because this is an area where I think young Australians can show their commitment, what they are made of and it is a place where we can show our belief in them and our support for them in one of the rare ways in which a Government can actually have a role and make a difference and I hope in this respect we have.

Running a political party is a bit like running a netball team. Except in public life there are no grand finals. In your game, at least, there is a grand final. In our's, even after you win the election, they say "they'll never win another one". There is a problem a week later and it all sort of turns to ashes. So there are no grand finals and you know how hard it is to keep the psychology of the team together and to keep that belief in yourself and that sort of instinct to go on, that determination, that willingness to will yourself on. All of these things are true in public life as they are, I think, in sport. It is one of the rare parallels I think you can make with world championship sport.

Now I am not saying we are as fit a team as you are - we are not - or that I am the fittest one of the team because I am not. But the fact of the matter is, we do have a slight idea of what it is like to be out there all the time in that competitive environment, all the time knowing that it is a mind-play most of the time. You have got to have the general state of fitness and the dexterity to be in it, but in the end you have got to have the belief in yourself and the belief in the group of you as a corporate entity, as a group of people and of course, in this case, in your values and what you want to achieve.

In this building we all know you have these things because you can't do what you have done without them and I think that is the thing that brings so much pleasure to us. The fact that young Australians, as you are, have this belief and these values and this is what has willed you on to win and you are, as John said, a role model for many thousands of Australian young people and especially young women who in this day and age - where we are all buffeted by opinions and views and news and everything else and cultural change and economic change and all of the other things that move our lives around today, much more than they have been moved by other generations - I mean out there to have some shining lights is a really, I think, important thing for us. So on behalf of all Australians we thank you most sincerely and salute what you have been able to do.

Could I just say a few words about Margaret Pewtress. I didn't know her well, but I got to know her reasonably well. She was a great woman, a great believer in young Australians, a great contributor to sport and we are very sad at her passing. She always provided such gusto to the general question of the organisation of sport in Australia, particularly for women, and I know she is sorely missed by you and will be by the rest of us. She is one of those real foot soldiers of Australian sport. She was always in there, every year, through the good years and the bad years, in there basically trying to make it better. So I am delighted we will remember her by a special award which will be associated with the Prime Minister's Award and it couldn't be a more fitting person to have that, if you like, longterm acknowledgment by all of you and those associated with you and those hundreds and thousands of young Australian women in the sport, for Margaret.

So perhaps I will conclude by again congratulating Michelle, on behalf of the team, and Jill, who has coached them, and the other key members of the side to say what a great job you have done, how you have kept it together and

doing it on two consecutive occasions is proof positive, if we needed it, that you really have what it takes. And Michelle the fact that you have been able now to finish your career on such a high point, is no doubt a personal pleasure for you and as it is for you, it is for the rest of us.

I think this is another thing, of course, which we have often seen in sport. That some people never quite retire at the time that they think they should have and that shows again judgement and good sense and it comes to the course at the crowning moment in your career. Congratulations. Thank you, all of you, for your magnificent efforts on behalf of Australia. We are all very proud of you indeed.

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