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PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, BASS HILL, SYDNEY, 1 SEPTEMBER 1995**

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J: Prime Minister, is the federal party moving away from NSW Labor over its broken promises in the run up to the federal election?

PM: I think the public of NSW, like the public of most States, know what is a federal issue and what is a state issue. These issues here of notoriety - tollways - are a state issue and, I think, that they understand that.

J: As a member of Western Sydney, are you disappointed at this particular action taken by the Carr government?

PM: I think that promises of this variety - governments and oppositions - need to know if they can be implemented. Now, all new governments, I suppose, as scales fall from their eyes when they arrive, but it does get people's hopes up and then it dashes them and, I think, this is a great pity because one needs the moral strength of public life, of commitments from the public to keep the whole thing going. That is, in a democracy we draw our strength from the public and from the public only. So, keeping the public's belief in the integrity of the system is important.

J: Is the government bowing to union pressure by putting off the sale of ANL for two months?

PM: No, it is just that it is a very large change. We are seeking to sell ANL to P&O. P&O has extensive interests on the waterfront as well as at sea and it gives the unions and the government a chance and P&O together - the three of us - to map out a course for the future including for ANL which we can't do with a quick document over lunch. So, I think, it is like a policy due diligence and it is a good thing that it is happening this way. It is a very good thing for the waterfront, a very good thing for ANL, for the seaman, a good result for employment of Australian people at sea. I had a conversation with Lord Stirling yesterday from P&O where he was talking about training more officers and engineers in Australia to serve, not just on ANL vessels, but on

the 240 odd other P&O vessels around the world, or some of them. And also, training ratings who serve at sea, perhaps up to petty officer standard so that they can get higher incomes and do more interesting work. So, I think, it is going to be a pretty good outcome.

J: Prime Minister, Richard Court says it is disgusting that you have attacked the judge in such an open and blatant personal way. Is he right?

PM: He is not a judge, he is a commissioner set up under Richard Court's government.

J: It is a legally constituted royal Commission, Prime Minister.

PM: What it is is Richard Court believing that governments have authority even if they abuse the authority. Governments do have authority, but again, authority comes with the respect only of the community and when governments poison the authority as Richard Court has now poisoned the royal commission's power, for everybody, then he can expect nothing more than this sort of general criticism of the motivations by him of establishing or seeking to use the royal commission's power in this way.

J: What about the legitimacy of the royal commission, do you think that your comments may have reduced that?

PM: Well, it is very obvious here, the Royal Commissioner has himself said that there is no crime here, there are no misdemeanours here. The royal commission was set up with political motives in mind. It is now turning sour on Richard Court because mostly, nearly always, every political stunt reacts against the people who establish them or do them and that is what he is now living with.

J: On the Mabo legislation, why are you moving towards this amendment?

PM: Simply because the High Court has made some decisions about procedural process. That is, that the Native Title Tribunal has to be the agent of the federal court and not to be seen to be usurping functions of the court. So, I think, the Brandy Case meant that the High Court has said that certain procedural processes should be followed and we will be making procedural technical amendments accordingly.

J: In this session?

PM: We may not draft it early enough for this session. We may even be able to draft it for presentation this session, but they don't go to the heart of the principles of Mabo. Again, they are procedural fulfilment of the Brandy High Court Case.

J: What about the advertisements in the newspapers?

PM: It is for the Government a very proud statistic and for the community a very encouraging one that we have now had 16 quarters of consecutive growth - four straight years of growth - and we are growing now at just 3 3/4 per cent - just under four per cent. In other words we are really moving along at a good pace, a good sustainable pace with low inflation. What the budget papers show is that the Treasury expects these numbers to continue for the next four years. So, if this is the first time in 24 years that we have had 16 consecutive quarters of growth and we have another four years or three years out in the budget forecast as the Treasury is forecasting, that sort of period - six or seven years of consecutive growth - it will be way beyond any Australian experience and as we are already seeing with 16 quarters. So, for the public who have been misled to thinking it is all going to be five minutes of sunshine or something else, I don't know how many five minutes there are in four years, someone can do the sums, but there are many of them.

J: On the Australia Remembers celebrations you said that it helped the soul of the nation, can you expand on that?

PM: The things Australians celebrate are the things they do together - community things - and the greatest community action in Australia in the last half century, of course, was the Second World War. And it is that we commemorate. We commemorate those who served and those who died, but we commemorate the fact that we fought together and the country worked together during this crisis. If you look back on all of the various things we both celebrate and commemorate, it is the things we do together, are the things we feel most strongly about.

J: Do you think it enhances our move towards a republic ...

PM: I think Australians now feel that we have such confidence about ourselves now, a pride in the country we have become, of the place we have made for ourselves here, that Australians are coming to recognise that we can only be the complete Australian nation if our head of state is an Australian person. I think that is the point.

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