



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL AT THE BRISBANE AIRPORT, BRISBANE, 5 SEPTEMBER 1995

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Well thank you very much, Laurie [Brereton], Frank Conroy, Premier, Parliamentary colleagues and ladies and gentlemen.

Well it is a pleasure to open such a lovely building. This is an obviously elegant and functional thing and what I like about it is that this is not an international building. It wasn't borrowed from the plan cupboard of some firm of American architects, or European architects. It was designed by Queensland architects - I think the name is Bligh Voller. They were involved, also, in the other terminal and I congratulate them and I congratulate the builders, Civil & Civic, for doing something that reflects the confidence all of us have in Australia.

This building is a confident building. It says something about Australia and it says something about Queensland and I think the confidence that Australia has, Queensland has by the bucket. This is a very confident place. I think it has - and I have said recently - a wind behind it now in Queensland it didn't have so many years ago. And it may be that the state of political opinion is divided in Queensland, but the state of confidence certainly isn't.

It is growing. It is growing at the moment about 1 percentage point faster than the rest of Australia and it is a great tribute to Wayne Goss and his Government that when the rest of the country is moving along at 3.7 per cent, Queensland is moving along at 4.6 per cent or 4.7 per cent.

So it is, I think, not just simply an addition to the stock of the aviation assets in this country, but it is a building which says something about a few important statements. One, about Australian architecture; two, about our confidence; three, about the pride we have in the place; and, I think it beckons to the neighbourhood we live in saying that here is an entrance to Australia from the rest of the world, or an exit from Australia to the world we live in around us, because we know we are now part of that community as we have never been before and that we know we are a welcome part of that community as well.

We were just speaking at the table here talking about the impact of the Kansai regional developments and Osaka airport, the impact that had here on Brisbane, that one development. And we know that one of the great challenges of foreign economic policy in these years will be preparing the world for the entrance of the Chinese economy to it. That huge country with its vast, rapidly growing economy and with it, of course, will be wealth, consumerism, travel. All of this is going to have a major impact upon the rest of us, upon our lives, upon our outlook and upon our business and travel opportunities and these are all things, I think, that we are preparing for here.

If you look at Brisbane Airport, the domestic terminal and the international terminal, you would have to say this a place going somewhere. This is a place that wants people to come here. So I think that we are in that part of the world where most of the major decisions in aviation are going to be made and we made a few big ones ourselves in One Nation.

We took away any of the interface between the domestic and international carriage of passengers. We folded Australian Airlines into Qantas. We gave Ansett an international license. We have sought to build and we haven't yet a trans-Tasman air service, a single Australasian destination, a single Australasian airline market. But we have succeeded, I think, in strengthening Qantas, which will now be a capital adequate company. In times of scarce resources, Governments can't put the capital into businesses such as Qantas.

We did a trade sale with British Airways which will bring, not only synergies, but some airline intelligence to the board beyond that which, of course, resides their naturally. But from, of course, another company with a different perspective. Qantas will be a strong airline. The challenge now will be to make Ansett strong and that will mean keeping the capital up to it and seeing the growth opportunities come and seeing the development of a good solid aviation market in Australia and in Australasia. These, I think, have all been milestones.

We have sought in that One Nation package - not only to kick start the economy back to growth, which in fact it has succeeded in doing - but, at the same time, drawing all the transport linkages together. Only just a month or two ago, Laurie Brereton and I and the Premier have had the pleasure of getting on the One Nation train, which is the first standard gauge linkage between Brisbane and Perth, via Melbourne.

Now we are talking about bringing Track Australia into being, which will have one track, a track business, whose job it will be to run a competitive permanent way on which all manner of railway companies and locomotive operators can operate, so we can start to see some balance back in our transport - away from road, to rail - see these efficiencies rise while, at the same time, we are seeing hubbing and also these linkages with the aviation industry.

So, there were, I think, some important touch stones there, certainly for aviation. One of them was to bring the development of this airport forward. Another through this period, of course, has been to fund the capital

subscriptions we have needed for the FAC and to guarantee its borrowing program and I'd like to take this opportunity to add to Laurie Brereton's remarks in congratulating Frank Conroy and his fellow Directors on a job well done in building quite rapidly the aviation assets, the terminal assets we've needed in Sydney, Melbourne, Alice Springs, Darwin, Brisbane et cetera. To get that critical mass for us for the growth in the tourism industry which we have had. We can now start to sell those assets off, but we have now a critical mass of assets that actually work for the country.

By bringing those market disciplines to aviation we are going to see a better industry. We will see, probably, better services over time, tighter services, better price services. We can see it in aviation when we deregulated the airline industry, we saw prices fall by around 20 to 25 per cent and a 60 per cent plus increase in passenger movements and already Sydney airport when we sat down looking at that second runway, I think, Sydney is now - just in a few years since we began that construction - is already well into the turn of the century traffic levels that have arrived in an unanticipated way from the deregulation of the airline system.

So, these things have happened and it does mean that we have a very large tourism market on our hands and one which we can grow and, of course, with the Olympics coming up at the end of the century it is going to make a terrific difference to that.

But, I think, the thing that is making the greatest difference is the confidence we have in ourselves. The confidence we have in Australia. The faith we have in what we are able to do. Our sense of ourselves and our identity. All these things are underpinning the growth of our tourism market, it is underpinning the growth of the economy and here we are bolting along at around 4 per cent growth with a couple per cent of inflation, just about the highest employment growth in the western world and at the same time anticipating now the building of a pacific rim community through bodies like APEC, making these bilateral linkages around the region with important countries we trade with and now grow with and live with. These are, I think, the hallmarks of the sort of view we will always have of the place.

I was very pleased to see our Aboriginal dancers with us because Aboriginal culture and tradition is now an important part of Australia's culture and tradition. There was a milestone met when the High Court said that Aboriginal custom and tradition will be a source of Australian common law and there is a native title there. The Government had the pleasure of legislating that. But not just that, in the celebration of those traditions and customs, we are seeing that also reflecting in our tourism industry. We are pleased about it and we know that when we come to terms with the Aboriginal community we will come to terms with ourselves and understand better and appreciate more the fact that this ancient continent has been bequeathed to us and that they have held it in trust down through the centuries for us to enjoy with them.

This view of Australia and Asia is important. Those societies around us like Indonesia - 200 million people - old societies, say, show us how they treat their indiginies and we'll see how they treat us. It is an indication of whether

Australia has turned over a leaf or whether it hasn't. Whether it is still the country that only 20 years ago selected people on the basis of race for immigration. It is not a long time ago. They are big sins to live down, but we have made a great start.

These are all the things, I think, that are caught up in the confidence we now have and we are now well and truly locked into the fastest growing part of the world. For instance, the thing that changed most our lives has been the 747, given us mobility that other generations have never had and yet the decision about whether Boeing puts another lid on the 747 or builds a new aircraft are going to be made in Asia. They are not going to be made in Europe or North America, they are going to be made in Asia. They are going to be made probably in APEC. They are going to be made in airports such as these and they will have huge implications for us when they are made.

Today we do celebrate the opening of this terminal, in a way we are celebrating the buoyancy that Brisbane has as well. We are celebrating the fact that very shortly we are going to see further growth in air traffic movements here. This will be the second busiest airport in Australia before very much longer and I think the things the Premier mentioned - the Casino, the Exhibition Centre - even more perhaps poignantly and recently the Australia Remembers 50th commemoration, I think, lends further support to the notion that Brisbane has caught its wind and it is really off and running and it has got a critical mass and a depth and a cultural interest that it didn't have in the past. This should be a matter of great national joy. It is to me. It is why I am very happy to be here today to see this built in a Queensland way, a Queensland sort of building with new things, like, there is no interface - (airside) of the building is now the one side with this innovation we see upstairs and there won't be a wailing wall anymore at the airport. We will be able to look through. So here we have got space, light, colour, elegance, we have got all of those things and it is unmistakably Australian. That is why I am so pleased to declare it officially open. Thank you.

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