



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP SPEECH FOR THE OPENING OF THE BLACKTOWN BUS/RAIL INTERCHANGE, BLACKTOWN, 14 OCTOBER 1995

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It's a great pleasure to be here - it's great being in the West again. I used to come out to Blacktown on my pushbike. Today, I came out on the train, and it was a good ride too - nice and quick, and smooth. And I think the thing that we celebrate here today is we always - as Australians - tend to value community things. We like to do things together. We appreciate doing things as a community. And this is a big community effort - this is something done between the Government of the Commonwealth, and the State of NSW - \$25 million for, as the Mayor and Brian Langton said, the largest Interchange in the CityRail system. Now, you know, I'm sure sometimes Blacktown feels the squeeze between Penrith on one side and Parramatta on the other - well, one thing is for sure - you have got the biggest railway station. And you have got that - and not only that, a modern one, and you have it because it does serve the community and you need it. And we know that given the fact that these days in a big metropolis like Sydney, you have got to be able to move around it to find work, and to find enjoyment, and it's not easy in any city these days moving on the roads - you get a better ride and a faster one, and a cheaper one by going on the rail system with CityRail. And so, this is why we have built it. We have tried to make your life better and easier and more comfortable by developing this Interchange so that you can make the link easier from the railway station to the bus, so you can get home, and you don't have to be sitting up in the car sweltering on the way out with the western sun belting you in the chest all the way home, and the sun belting you in the eyes all the way in. I used to a bit of that a few years ago, and that's why I decided to take the train for a long time too. But in those days, it was the red rattlers, of course - one had to fight for a place on them.

I'm very pleased that the Better Cities program of the Commonwealth could be arraigned here, and used here - we're spending \$1 billion in trying to develop facilities such as this and re-develop some others. And, of course, we have got the Y-section rail link just back down the line, we have got he re-

construction of Parramatta station, and of those of you who go to the city and go past the old railway workshops, we're re-building that as a place for living, as a place for medium-density development. And of course, Ultimo-Pyrmont we have got money there seeking to do that, as we also have in Newcastle. So, this program is, I think, an important one, and one where we can use the Commonwealth with the States to create really good things. And we have been able to do this with NSW in a place like this in Western Sydney.

Now, I know a lot of people in Western Sydney think that the Government resources won't be committed to them. But, let me tell you this - Labor Governments always stick with the people in working areas because they know that the social wage and community values are the things which make a difference to their life. We're just now in our fifth year of economic growth - we have just completed 16 quarters of economic growth. The economy has been growing at about 4-5% a year, we have had 670,000 jobs since the last election, and if you live in the Western Suburbs of Sydney, the thing that matters most to you is the strength of that economy. Because most of us live off the ebb and flow of the economy - if it's doing well, you do well. If it's doing poorly, most people feel the effects, or they feel the unemployment. And we have been getting people back to work at a record rate, as we have a record number of people joining the labour market from school and from migration, and women who are coming into the labour market as they haven't come before. And as a consequence, getting that economy growing matters a great deal.

Then, of course, there's all of the other things that help - the social programs like the Family Allowance, or the Family Allowance Supplement, or Additional Family Payment as we call it today. Or Rent Assistance, or of course, that big foundation stone - Medicare, which is under our health system. These are all the things that buttress the sort of life that you have. And then of course, education. Just a decade ago, only 3 kids in 10 completed secondary school - this year, it's 8 in 10. And you know where the big gains are? They are in the Western Suburbs of Sydney, and places like it - in the big areas where working people live, so that we can see the children of working parents do well in secondary school and in universities. This is the great liberating force in Australian life - you jump the boundaries by education. And that's where our mobility comes from - so the kids of working class parents get their break in the education system. And if they get sick, they get looked after by Medicare. And if mum and dad have got a modest income, they get support in the Family Allowance Supplement. They get support with Rent Assistance. They get support with childcare. They get support with these sorts of things, and they get support with facilities like this.

Now these are the things that Labor Governments do, and Labor Governments believe in. By the way, my little mate Johnny Howard was out there talking to ACOSS yesterday - that's the Australian Council of Social Services. And he was saying he has had a big Paulian conversion on the road to Damascus, or so he would have you believe. Three years ago, they were going to kick working people to death with their policies, in terms of throwing people off unemployment benefits after 9 months, scrapping

Medicare, making you pay the full freight for health insurance, knocking down all the Social Security payments, they want to cut \$10,000 million out of Government spending, but of course now he says he won't touch any of these programs. Well, the thing is - I'll give you a bit of good advice: don't believe him. Don't believe him. He will go for you again just as he was going to go for you through John Hewson 3 years ago - 16 members of the 19 members of the front bench [of the Opposition] are still the same people that put Fightback together. So, they have all had this - it's been like group therapy - they have all had the Paulian conversion on the road to Damascus - they have all seen the light in 3 years. Now, you would have to give John Howard the Gregory's to get out to Blacktown. He would need an army map to get out there - I reckon I could get my old pushbike and it would get out here by itself.

But, be that as it may, the fact of the matter is - again, let me return to this theme: what matters are the things we do as a community. Now, when Australia Remembers was on just 2 months ago, the reason a nation felt proud of it, that we felt part of it, is because we fought that war together as a community. And Australians rejoice in community things - because it is not just private wealth and private reward - that's all right for the individuals. But it's not right for everybody. We want to keep the egalitarian values of community spirit and a fair go, and inclusion, that we are all in this together, These are the values that we want to keep going. And this is very much what inspires projects such as this - to say if you live in Western Sydney, you're as entitled to good transport as if you live in the ritzy parts of Sydney. And that the Government is not going to forget about you - it's going to put these facilities in place, it's going to see that they're safe. And this thing has got, I believe, 37 Closed Circuit Television cameras, it's all open so people can see through it, there's going to be safe areas of a night which are going to be policed so your kids can come home on the train, and they can go to a place where you know they are not going to be accosted, or worse. These are the things that matter to the security, to our peace of mind, and to the way we live. At any rate, I'm glad to be here today, back in Blacktown with my colleagues Russ Gorman and Roger Price, who have, of course, represented this area fervently and well over a long period of time, and to be here with the Labor Minister for Transport, Brian Langton, in opening this great facility. It's a great thing for Sydney, for the rail system, but a good thing for Blacktown and the environs, and I am very pleased and proud to be here to officially open it. Thank you very much, indeed.

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