



## **PRIME MINISTER**

**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP**

### **NO ISSUES PLEASE - WE'RE PROFESSIONALS**

The Coalition's "strategy" of keeping the Australian people in the dark about policy matters for the election has today reached new heights of absurdity.

The Liberals have refused to answer a straightforward question put to them by the ABC on what they see as the main issues at the next election because this "is of a strategic political nature and cannot be disclosed before the election campaign".

Andrew Robb, the Liberal Party's Federal Director, has justified this insult to the Australian electorate on the grounds that the parties are playing for big stakes and it is professional and disciplined not to comment on these matters.

This is despite an Adelaide newspaper report today which suggests the Liberal Party's policies for the election were "finalised and packaged at the weekend." If they're ready, why not let the public see them and make an informed assessment.

John Howard and his colleagues are quite happy to engage in daily exercises in muckraking and personal abuse but do not have the honesty and intellectual depth to engage the Australian people in a debate on the kind of Australia they envisage for the future and on the policies which could achieve this.

And yet, when the Government points to the ideological attitudes and the previous policies they have taken to the people as a guide to their real intentions, the Liberals simply accuse us of lying and of manufacturing a scare campaign.

Mr Robb's latest excursion into the absurd only serves to increase the suspicion and scepticism with which Australians will view the Coalition's political tactics.

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Andrew Robb : "World at Noon" ABC TV, November 1

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**ROBB:** Well as we've predicted for months now, we've observed that their members, especially in the regional seats, where they're vulnerable, have been running away from Paul Keating, running a hundred miles from Paul Keating, trying to distance themselves from the Labor Party, but the irony is that everyone of those people have voted for every pioco of legislation that's gone through with the Keating Government over the last three years. They haven't opposed anything in the House, all the tax increases, the petrol tax increase, the Medicare levy increases, all of the broken promises, they've been a party to it, and they're now trying to quite cynically present themselves as Independents in the electorate. Now I think that is taking the electorate for granted.

**EWART:** That's the way politics works though, doesn't it? Are you ready to combat that?

**ROBB:** Well, all we can do is shine a light on it. We can try and expose that. We have been saying that this is what they'll do, this is what they're doing, we've been saying that for months.

**EWART:** An ABC survey of both Liberal and Labor candidates that's just been done, the results of that are coming in now and the consistent answer from Liberal candidates, when they're questioned on what they see as being the issues at the next election, their answer is - that question is of a strategic political nature and cannot be disclosed before the election campaign. Now isn't that getting a bit paranoid?

**ROBB:** No, no, no. This is a campaign, we're playing for big stakes in this election, this is all about the future of Australia. We have to play a very professional part in the campaign that we run and the period before the campaign, so I think it's quite critical that we have a disciplined effort by all of our candidates across the country.

**EWART:** But, if, as you seem to suggest, the election campaign could be off and running any day now. Don't you need to have a bit more detail than that?

**ROBB:** The work is done, and we will, as we've promised, we will release further detail and all the detail that the electorate need to make a judgement between now and election day.

**ENDS**