



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, MELBOURNE
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- J:** Prime Minister, superannuation. The Coalition appears to have adopted a key part of your policies as their own, and called it their own now – what's your response to them?
- PM:** Well, the obvious response is if people want good, progressive policy, keep the authors of the policy – not some faker who is trying to pick it up on the cheap.
- J:** Prime Minister, retail trade is down a fraction – is that a good sign of the economy?
- PM:** Oh, God knows, pal. That needs to be deciphered by geniuses like you.
- J:** Prime Minister, on what do you base your claim that you say Victoria has the lowest arts spending of all the States – where do you get that from?
- PM:** Oh, just on a few simple statistics. I don't know whether I have still got the piece of paper, but it's materially below all of the other States – Victoria spends less money on the arts than any of the other States, and, of course, can I also just quote Mr Haddon Storey in terms of Commonwealth spending. In writing to Michael Lee earlier this year, [he] said "I was particularly pleased to learn of the initiatives that are to be developed in the State of Victoria. Once again, may I commend you for the development of the cultural policy, and for the initiatives that begin to address the imbalance in allocation of Federal resources that has unfortunately become the characteristic of arts funding over the past

decade". Now, a lot, of course, of the national companies are here. Now, they can't simply be counted as simply Commonwealth/Canberra institutions. They are actually institutions which are shared by all of us, including the city of Melbourne.

J: Do you accept that (inaudible)...?

PM: No. I don't. And it's like these shonky ads by Jeff Kennett this morning. I mean, what he has done is publish the 94-95 spending on a project that...he's published spending of \$1,370,000, but the project cost \$16 million. Now, that's just shabby and dishonest.

J: What do you think is behind his attack then, Mr Keating?

PM: Well, he's just trying to help Howard out. He's beyond help - he shouldn't bother. I say this to Jeffrey - look after yourself.

J: What do you think of the report this morning that the Liberal campaign slogan is going to be "Time's Up, Paul"?

PM: Well, I always say to our people that Andrew Robb is the Kim Philby of the Labor Party - he is our man helping us out, because almost everything he touches turns to clay. You know, always remember that he is in there helping us.

J: Will you rule out a December 9 election?

PM: Oh God, you know I get asked that sort of silly question daily - let me give you the standard answer. Say this to your news director with feeling, that what I believe is the public expect to have real value from the parliaments, that they don't expect the Government to be going early, or to be short-circuiting the opportunities - the Legislative and Governmental opportunities.

J: Mr Keating, back on superannuation - you say don't believe John Howard when he gives these various commitments - do you believe Mr Costello, and secondly, do we need another inquiry into the financial system?

PM: Is that what they have said?

J: Yeah.

PM: They will say anything, I tell you. I mean, here they are - the last inquiry into the financial system...you know, I will tell you a little story. When I first became Treasurer - which is now quite a long time ago - I came into

this dingy little office which Mr Howard used to occupy, and they had cleared out all of their things. You know, the cupboards were bare. And there was a copy of the Campbell Report on the shelves, and it must have been sitting in the sun, and it had gone yellow. He commissioned it, and did nothing with it. The thing about Mr Howard – he's not a conservative, he is a reactionary. I mean, Menzies was a Conservative. Conservatism is about maintaining the status quo, and perhaps incremental movements forward. Mr Howard always wants to go back. So, they commissioned that study – which came, really, from an idea of one of the staff members of Malcolm Fraser's office – he did nothing with it. The float of the dollar, the opening up of the financial markets – all of these things were left on the shelf, and they were done by this Government. We have now got a burgeoning, growing financial market, the exchange rate – the price of it – set in the markets, interest rates are set in the markets, we have got a very...there's a lot of tone on our financial markets. I think about the last thing we need now is another inquiry into the financial markets. I mean, they say these things every day – you're just wasting your time and mine.

- J: What about the regulation of the financial markets?
- PM: There's no regulation left. What regulation? The exchange rate is set in the market, the interest rates are set in the market.
- J: Well, the various regulatory authorities like the Competition Commission and....
- PM: You don't like those?
- J: Well, he doesn't. He says that there's too many, and they're too much overweight.
- PM: Oh, yeah. I know – he says all sorts of things.
- J: Our State Government has released details of a city link....(inaudible)...they're trying to push people onto a basically privately run freeway – have you got any views on that?
- PM: I mean, here we are, where in the last decade, our GDP has more than doubled, and we're seeing the Stock Market climb by a factor of five, where the country is much wealthier than it used to be, but we can't afford to run an ambulance service. We can't even afford to leave open the toilets on the railway stations. I mean, Jeff Kennett has got the lock and chain on the toilets on the railway stations. What's the world coming to? I mean, what does he think he's doing? He's looking after his pals down there at the Casino, and, as I said a moment ago, the Casino here in

Victoria is a tax on the poor, and a blight on the State of Victoria. And, no doubt, if he gets up to any other tricks – be it the Albert Park Grand Prix, or the City Link – he'll try and shut all the roads off so people must pay the money. Now, as I said a moment ago, Jeffrey is a very worried man. He has finally worked out that people don't like him very much, and they don't like him for these sorts of shenanigans. That is, trying to jam the roads off to make you pay the toll. I mean, what's he doing? The thing is, you see, he believes in public squalor – this is the sort of snaky Liberal Party view these days – this is how the Liberal Party has changed so much. It believes now in public squalor – can't afford a toilet in a railway station, can't afford an ambulance if you have had a heart attack, can't afford a road through a capital city, you can't drive through it if you don't want to take the freeway. As I said, he has got the building down in Treasury Place done out like the Reichstag, he's sitting up there and, you know, in the end this community will hate him. They will hate him for all of the things he is doing which are so un-Australian. They will hate him for it.

- J: Prime Minister, John Howard was in Melbourne last night wooing the Chinese community...?
- PM: Look, John Howard couldn't woo anybody. He couldn't woo anyone. He can't even woo them in a Liberal Party conference. The last time I saw a Liberal leader at the Chinese community, was Alexander Downer chasing a meatball around a plate with a pair of chop-sticks. It's on film – you'll find him. He chases it all around the plate, you know. John Howard wooing the Chinese community – well, well, well. I'll tell you one thing about the Chinese – they are very smart. They won't be taken in by him. Because let me tell you – every time he's had the chance to kick the racial can in Australia, he has. You know what those Chinese think about him, deep in their hearts? They think if this bloke had a fair go at us, he would send us back. That's what they think about him.
- J: Your comments on the Casino being a tax on the poor and a blight – can you expand on that?
- PM: Well, of course it's a tax on the poor. They open up, everyone turns up in their zoot suits, their dinner suits and the champagne, four days later, they're emptying people out from the working suburbs of Australia. You know, when they have run out of money, they pour them out the door. I mean, it's a bad cultural and social development.
- J: Does that apply everywhere, Mr Keating?

PM: I hate the things – I don't like Casino's. I mean, I don't have that much in common with Rupert Murdoch, but one thing I do is – I think Casino's are bad news.

J: What about some regulation in that area?

PM: Well, that's for a smart journo like you to get right onto, mate.

J: Could you still run an election campaign and attend the CHOGM and APEC meetings?

PM: Well, there's a political science unit near here – you want to go and throw that question in, and see what answer they give you.

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