



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA CATTERNS, TRIPLE J, 15 DECEMBER 1995

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AC: Welcome back to Triple J, Mr Keating.

PM: Thank you, Angela. Good to be here, particularly on this day.

AC: Now, five more transmitters have begun broadcasting the Triple J word today, with another set to begin on the weekend. What do you think it is going to mean to the young Australians in these areas?

PM: Well it must be unique, I think, as a national concept. I can't think of many other countries that have a network so extensive for young people. You know it was, I think, in 1989 we decided to extend the network - before that it used to be broadcasting in Sydney - we decided to extend it to other States and Territories and to Newcastle and then by the end of 1990, I think, it reached about 66 per cent of the population. And then you might remember, Angela, in August of 1993 we announced we would extend Triple J to 44 new metropolitan centres at a cost of \$12 million. And today, we are celebrating the extension to North East Tasmania, Geraldton, Albany, Mackay in Queensland, the Southern Downs of Queensland, and the La Trobe Valley of Victoria, and Bega and Cooma in New South Wales, amongst other places. So, I think, it will now go to all centres of more than 20,000 people. It will reach about 89 or 90 per cent of the population. So I can't think of any other country which has such a network. I think it is a fantastic concept.

AC: Mr Keating, why did you do it? What is the Government's aim in expanding Triple J like this throughout Australia?

PM: I think to provide a network where young people can listen to music, where we can expand the whole menu of Australian music, give them a station or a channel where they can listen to debates which affect them, that gives them a medium where they feel part of it and included

in it. It is a very inclusive concept - Triple J. You know everybody that has a common interest, whether by age or by inclination, can find somewhat of a spiritual home in the medium. So I think that is the reason.

AC: Oh, I am glad you think that.

PM: Well I must think it - we put the dollars down for it. You have got to think it.

AC: And so how committed are you, really, to representing the interests of young Australians? You know it seems all of a sudden politicians have realised there is a youth vote.

PM: Oh, I don't think so. I mean I don't think all of a sudden. Let me say, for my part, I have spent most of my political life making certain that young people today have more opportunities and a more interesting life than I had at their age. Not that my life, at their age, wasn't a good life. But it didn't have the vitality, the interests, the opportunities that, I think, young people have today. I mean just ten years ago, only three young people in ten completed secondary school. This year, it is just under eight in ten and as you know we massively expanded higher education and vocational education. And look at the internationalisation of the economy now. Look at the opportunities in Asia. What I found, myself, was working in Sydney for a Government employer and that is what I had mostly to look forward to. I mean today somebody can find themselves working for any number of people, can find themselves working in Asia, or in North America, or in Europe and be back here, then go somewhere else, or do something else. So, I think, that education is the great boundary jumper. Education is the thing that lets people jump the barriers of opportunity and so my political life has been about believing in the vitality of the sort of effervescence, the verve, of young Australians. And much of what I am about is including them and making them feel as though they are part of the place. I mean everything, in fact, we are doing ... you know this thing we put together in Osaka in Japan, a couple of weeks ago, with APEC - opening all the trade barriers up in the Pacific, taking all the tariff barriers off Australia, letting the thing breath, letting people go out there and be part of it. I mean some of these places are just so exciting.

AC: Mr Keating, you must be pleased with your diplomatic coup today. The security pact with Indonesia has really surprised us all. Why was it necessary?

PM: Well we live next to the Indonesians. They are an old society of 190 million people and we have to reach a point of clear understanding about what our own strategic intentions are towards each other and we don't want to see any conflict in the area any more. We saw this in the Second World War and the Korean War and in

Vietnam. So, we have developed a security agreement which is more than a defence agreement. It is about security. It is about doing clever things together in the region to secure ourselves so we never have to see ourselves in conflicts again. And that can extend to the peace accords in Cambodia which we worked on or the huge undertaking of APEC, opening up the trade barriers in the Asia-Pacific or just cooperating in any of the other fields where we believe we can make it better for Australians and Indonesians. And, where we commit ourselves to one another in a more formal way than we have ever done before.

AC: As we know Mr Keating you are a great supporter of self determination in Aboriginal Australia. Why not in East Timor?

PM: We are not arguing self determination in East Timor. East Timor is a province of Indonesia and has been since 1975. What we are concerned about in East Timor is the way in which people live, the respect for their rights as individuals and we have, as a government, always made our position clear on this with Indonesia. In fact, I am sure we have been one of the few countries making our views known as vociferously as we have and what ever possibilities the people of Timor have for better lives, lives where they believe all their liberties are being respected, it is in the context, I believe, of a broader deeper relationship between Australia and Indonesia. It is not going to be happening with Australia turning its back on Indonesia. This did happen from 1975 until about the middle of the 1980s. By and large, Australia turned its back on Indonesia. It took Timor nowhere and, I think, this sort of model we produced yesterday is the right framework to be working in for Timor.

AC: Has 1995 been a good year for you, Mr Keating?

PM: Well, we have got a lot of things done. I mean, good years for me are about what you can accomplish, what things you are able to do. For a start we have got this huge regional security agreement with Indonesia yesterday. Three weeks ago in Osaka we saw the action plan for the biggest free trade area in the world of which we were massively involved. We have laid out the blue print for republic. We delivered a superannuation system to all Australians which will most beneficially effect young Australians, giving them a decent standard of living in retirement and a pile of savings to go with it. We think, for this generation of young Australians, around \$2 trillion in savings - \$2000 billion - in national savings.

I think, we have had an extraordinary year for that generation of Australians who remember World War II with Australia Remembers. We have convened the Canberra Commission to start the world thinking seriously about getting rid of nuclear weapons and I am bringing that group together from around the world in Sydney in January.

As you know, we have had the economy ... the most pleasing thing is that the economy has been growing. We have had now the longest period of growth since World War II - 17 consecutive quarters of growth - and we have had 730,000 jobs since the last election and we have got the budget in surplus.

It is hard to have a better year than that. If you are sitting in this job, it is pretty hard to top that.

AC: How many plane trips do you reckon you have taken 1995?

PM: Oh well, as many as I have to. I am very stingy with my movements. I try not to move around unless I have to. If I have to go somewhere I try to do three things at once, rather than make three trips, but even so I do a lot of travelling.

AC: Are there any personal highs or lows you would care to share with us Mr Keating?

PM: I think getting the security agreement with Indonesia is a very big high for me.

AC: It sounds like you have been celebrating long into the night.

PM: I need a cup of tea or a coffee. I need a bit of a hit some where or a bit later, something else. No, I think, when something is done about the security of the country, I mean, every Prime Minister's first occupation must be with security of the country and this goes right centrally to it. The other high, I think, is APEC. APEC we started from nothing really, it was a small economic organisation in 1992 and we built it into the biggest free trade organisation. Certainly the biggest free-trade agenda in the world, with the United States, Japan, China, Indonesia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia - I mean, it's an enormous body. So, that was getting that action agenda into place in Osaka was really pleasing for me. And we have had a lot of other things - like, I got this proposal together for improving our civics education in our institutions. That is, talking about the workings and the traditions of our democracy, but in schools, which is going to affect the way people view the whole institutional basis of the country into the future. And the other thing, of course, I was very chuffed about was getting a solid framework down for the republic, and in the months since I did that speech in the House of Representatives, quite a number of people are now coming around to saying "well, on all things considered, the balances in that speech are pretty right". You know how people reflect on things, you know, people writing in newspapers and what have you. So, I'm very happy about that.

AC: Will you be taking a holiday, Mr Keating?

PM: I'm going to have a couple of weeks of - I always have two or three weeks off at Christmas because.

AC: Do you go away?

PM: Well, it's the only time in Australia that the country closes down, generally shuts up.

AC: Do you go to the beach, or a farm, or stay home?

PM: No. I mostly go to Sydney, because Sydney in summer is fantastic. You have the Festival of Sydney - all the good shows on, half the traffic, it's not too hot, and I mostly end up somewhere up at Pittwater. I do a bit of sailing, and I'm doing that this year, too.

AC: Sounds fun.

PM: I mean, just light - you know, no-one talking politics or policies, or....

AC: Turn the phones off. Tell us what a Keating family Christmas is like - does Annita cook?

PM: Well, she has always done, until we have come to the Lodge. But there, our chef always makes a nice Christmas meal for us. But, the main thing is - the joy we have always had - my youngest daughter is ten - Alexandra - and of course when we went to the Lodge she was six, and they were all relatively young. And always, I think, the joy for us is watching them sort of enjoy the day, and open their presents and have their friends around. It's that sort of a day - a day together.

AC: What do people buy you?

PM: I'm a bit hard to buy for.

AC: I can imagine.

PM: I'm a bit hard to buy for.

AC: Not socks and ties, I presume?

PM: Well, you can get me in with a good Tom Jones CD - I'm in the market for a few more of those.

AC: Right. I can hear him dropping hints.

PM: Yeah. I also...you know I like classical music, and I always look for some historic violin material.

AC: Really?

PM: People like David Oistrach, or Jascha Heifetz or Nathan Milstein - any of these sort of people. I'm always a sucker for a weepy tune.

AC: Are you?

PM: And the weepiest tunes, of course, come from violins. Or a weepy song.

AC: Mr Keating - big year ahead for you. Do you ever entertain the thought that you might lose the election?

PM: In this game it's all thrills and spills. One hopes for more thrills than spills, but there are spills around - you have got to avoid them if you can. You can't always.

AC: And so when will we all be voting then?

PM: Well, before next May.

AC: Before next May.

PM: The House of Representatives has to sit three years after it last, first sat. And it last first sat in this Parliament in May of 1993, so it's three years to May. Our tradition is to have it a little before the expiration of that time, and that may be so again. So, it's not far away.

AC: Not far away?

PM: It's not far away. And we're going to have a Christmas without too much politics, if I can pin Johnny Howard down to a decent Christmas day, and stop him running around.

AC: What - you and him are going to spend it together?

PM: No - I don't think we'll be going that. But, I think the public want a break. They want a break from the hubbub of public life, and all the buzzes of debate. And this, I think, is the cycle for that break.

AC: So, we'll probably go to the polls around about February some time?

PM: Well, that's what they say here in Parliament House, in the Press Gallery.

AC: Do they?

PM: Yes.

AC: Mr Keating, we appreciate very much you being here with us on this very exciting day. I don't know if you know, but Triple J at this time

every year conducts a poll of the best songs of the year. We call it the Hottest 100 - do you have a favourite song of 1995?

PM: I think that Christine Anu song - *Party* - is one of the things my kids like, and....

AC: Don't forget to tell them to vote in our Hottest 100, your kids.

PM: And I don't mind it myself.

AC: Good on you. Well, I'll play it for you now. Thank you so much for joining us today Mr Keating - Happy Christmas.

PM: Thank you Angela. Thanks for the yarn. Good bye.

AC: Bye.

ends.