



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
PRESS CONFERENCE WITH PARTIES TO THE CAPE YORK AGREEMENT, RADDISON  
HOTEL, CAIRNS, SUNDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 1996**

### **E&OE PROOF COPY**

**PM:** I have had a meeting today with my colleagues who are with me who are the parties to the Cape York Land Use Agreement and I must say, I have been tremendously impressed with the attitudes which have been expressed in the meeting. The declarations of good will which people have had and, I think, the recognition that to try to give people the benefits of the Cape and the quiet enjoyment of life free of perpetual litigation, free of arguments about land use, free of conflicting pressures over its heritage values, but rather to come together and see this as a way in which all the parties can secure something greater for themselves and the country is the way to proceed.

It is the very essence of an act of regional reconciliation and the whole process of reconciliation which, I think, has been mightily advanced by Mabo and the Native Title Act. In a sense by empowering Aboriginal people and giving them legal rights over lands for which they have traditional association has meant that this has started to move the log jam in some of these regions so that we can perhaps approach them now on a regional basis.

You might know that under the Native Title Act there is a provision there for regional agreements. What we have here is not a regional agreement as under the Native Title Act, but a movement a long way towards one with the land use agreement within which the interests of the pastoralists represented here by the Cattlemen's Union, the Aboriginal people by the Cape York Land Council and the ATSIC Regional Council and also by, of course, the conservation foundation and The Wilderness Society in terms of the world heritage values. It offers us a very uplifting opportunity to actually see the Cape being developed on a sustainable basis, operated on a sustainable basis where the heritage values are protected and where we have a secure pastoral industry, but one which itself operates in a way which is harmonious with the aspirations of Aboriginal people on the Cape.

This is the very essence of what the Commonwealth Government has sought to do with the reconciliation process and with the Native Title Act and also with those other policies such as Landcare - land use programs such as Landcare - and the Rural Adjustment Scheme which we have introduced as more general programs which will also have application on the Cape. Looking at property planning, whole of farm management, sustainable agriculture and then later if we are to head towards a full

regional agreement where we would, at that point, need to involve the State of Queensland we can look then at the proper resourcing of the area in terms of sewerage, environmental health issues, roads, housing, et cetera.

For the moment, I think this is if you like, a collation of very significant concessions which have been made to accommodate each of the parties aspirations and I am very happy to support the agreement and we will support the agreement on the basis of an assessment of the World Heritage values and establish a fund of \$40 million over four years which, of course, we have provided funding for in the Labor Party's funding arrangements for the ensuing Parliament. But, it will be \$40 million in a fund for over four years for the non-compulsory acquisition of high conservation value pastoral holdings and also using part of the fund to support sustainable management.

There is no one authority that can speak for this region. There is no one group and if we are to realise its great heritage potential and underpin its sustainability, at the same time provide for the more adequate enjoyment and use of the land by Aboriginal people then this, I'm sure, is the way to go and I would like to take the opportunity of very sincerely congratulating the parties on this very great initiative. It is an absolute model of reconciliation of differences and advancement of a common interest and I hope it can be a model to be used further in Australia and hopefully, at some point, move down the road of a full regional agreement under the Native Title Act.

Perhaps I could also say with the tourism assets in this region that are also so manifest and with the World Heritage area - the Daintree - that which the Government has already undertaken in funding the Daintree and World Heritage area back in the 1980s and now committing another, with the State of Queensland, \$22 million to buying back the properties in the hole-in-the-heart. It really means from Mosman to the top of Cape York we can conceive of an area where with some recognition of everyone's interests, support for the heritage values, understanding the importance of sustainability and some financial support from the Commonwealth through this and with more generally its other Landcare programs we can conceive an area which very few countries would ever have the opportunity of ever being able to consider for the national heritage of their country as we can this for Australia.

I am very happy to finish my remarks there. I am not sure whether my colleagues would like to add to them, if they do they are welcome, otherwise I am happy as I am sure they are, to take questions.

J: -- Mr Keating, do you think that this process implicitly recognises that resolution of Native Title issues through the tribunal process is flawed, that it isn't working?

PM: No, no, not at all. It is just that even when they are working they are going to take time and even if they take time there is going to be a legal process which is not necessarily going to suit all of the parties. Whereas what is being offered here is a process which is one where all of the parties interests are being met and this is the best way to advance it. That is why in the Native Title Act we did conceive of the notion of regional agreements. This is a regional land use agreement, but part of that land use agreement will go to resolution of some of the native title issues which will more adequately and expeditiously resolve some of the outstanding issues of which, of course, on the Cape there are many.

- J: Do you think there is a better way forward than relying on the native title ...
- PM: No, it is just a case of both because in some places such agreements will not be entered. I mean, such good-will will not be shown where it can't be conceived that interests can be met and they will be resolved by the process of the Native Title Act. Part of the affirmation, the clarity and strength of the Native Title Act is to let people know that Aboriginal people do have rights and they are going to need to be accommodated and to bring people to this sort of a process.
- J: How do you expect the State Government to react to this and how important is their agreement to it?
- PM: I don't know. I don't know what a Borbidge government's attitude would be to this. I think we will consult with them over the agreement and plans for World Heritage assessment and nomination, we will do that. I would like to think that like the Goss government they will recognise the considerable regional benefits for people here on the Cape. In the end, it is not simply about the heritage values, but rather about the communities on the Cape and that is important to us and I should imagine it would be important to the Borbidge government too. But, in the end, in respect of these issues the ultimate determinants of the issues here are the parties because we are not seeking from the Borbidge government a full regional agreement. Not at this point anyway.
- J: Mr Howard has announced this morning that not only will he commit up to \$40 million to protecting the high conservation areas of the Cape, but he will also engage in discussion with Bob Borbidge and the Federal and Queensland Coalitions to work together, to best implement the protection of these regions. Has he stolen your thunder and would he be better equipped to gain agreement from a Queensland Coalition government ...
- PM: He doesn't believe in these issues, you know that. He has discovered the environment about two weeks ago. I mean, the Native Title Act, his party said was a 'day of shame' when we passed it. It is the strength of the Native Title Act and also our interest in the World Heritage areas from the 1980s onwards and our continuing interest in the Cape, I think, which provides a basis to fund an agreement of this kind. It is not just money it is commitment. Mr Howard has neither the money nor the commitment because he has said, apparently, that any funding of Cape York would be dependent on the sale of Telstra and he knows that is not going to happen. It is not going to proceed. He will not get the sale of Telecom through the Senate. Therefore he has no funding for it and as Mr Beazley made clear last week, he has a \$3 billion deficiency in the funding he has already provided. So, he can afford to do none of the things he is saying he will do.
- J: Mr Keating, would you not proceed with World Heritage nomination without the agreement of the State government?
- PM: I would firstly, rather than jump at that, baulk at that particular proposition, pay the State government the courtesy, as I would any State government, of seeking to interest them in these values. If we are talking about an area which has the potential of a World Heritage listing we are talking about something very unique and you have got to be a very strange government not to be interested in something like that. I assume that they would be

J: ... unnecessary precondition though for proceeding?

PM: I would certainly, before I did anything else, have a very real and meaningful discussion with the Borbidge government about it.

J: Does this agreement need to have legislative backing either at the State or Federal level and what are the implications on both fronts?

PM: It would need, obviously, an appropriation from the Commonwealth and it would be for these World Heritage and management purposes here on the Cape. We would make that clear because of its unique character and because what the parties have done here is, I think, unique. We would propose to both houses of Parliament an appropriation to fund the agreement because the agreement is something in the Commonwealth's interest, in the nation's interest and worthy of that funding.

J: What agency, Mr Keating, do you imagine managing the \$40 million fund and carrying out the environmental assessment?

PM: That is something we would need to think about. As you know we already have a World Heritage Administration here - Wet Tropics Administration - we are speaking here not of Wet Tropics, but we are speaking of something similar. So, we would need to think about that, whether it is under the Department of the Environment or to what extent we engage the Department of Primary Industries and Energy because of a very large component of this is the sustainability of pastoral practices and the pastoral industry, the development and growth of the pastoral industry on the Cape.

J: You were saying that there would be non compulsory acquisition, but if there was an area of particularly high conservation value, potentially World Heritage value, do you think there is a case for compulsory acquisition?

PM: It depends on whether they have been managed sustainably. No one is going to cut the land off, excise it off and float it out to sea. It is going to be there and it is just a matter of whether it is being managed sustainably. Therefore, I just don't think the notion of compulsion is appropriate here. It is a huge area of Australia and it can only really be preserved if all the parties are interested in it. There is no government authority, no one authority can do this, it has got to be done by the people who live there.

J: ... Mr Downey, does the comments made by the Prime Minister today, bring the ACF firmly back in behind the Labor Party, particularly in light of the commitments of Mr Howard also seems to have made ...

JD: That might be a point for me to make a couple of introductory comments if you don't mind and I'll get to that question. About 10 minutes ago, I don't know whether people are aware, but today is actually the highest tide in North Queensland and it occurred at 10:30am and I think there are parallels we can draw and say that the tide has also turned for one of Australia's natural and cultural areas and that is Cape York Peninsula.

In an age, as I have said before, when so many of this country's wild places have been lost and suffered under the destruction that has come with western

industrialisation and in an age where 70 per cent of the country is in some form of degradation and in an age where those great wild places that haven't been protected in the last decade and are not protected in the next decade will almost certainly be lost, Australians have stood up and said they want their icon areas protected. Over the last decade we have had the big ones - Kakadu, the Wet Tropics and the Daintree, Fraser Island, the western forests of Tasmania - and let's make no mistake about it, Cape York Peninsula is also one of those big ones that ranks up there with those.

Whether it is because Cape York Peninsula contains one fifth of Australia's rain forest including the largest low land tropical rain forest left in the country, whether it is because it contains and significant vast amounts of old growth forest, tropical savanna woodland that is probably the largest outside of Africa in the world, whether it is because it contains the largest and richest and most diverse wetlands and mangrove communities in this country, 60 per cent of Australia's butterflies, 80 per cent of our orchard species, one pastoral lease on Cape York Peninsula contains a quarter of all Australian frogs, all those natural values cumulatively can only draw one conclusion. That Cape York is, in fact, one of our great icon natural areas.

For that reason, today's announcement is a momentous occasion. It does rank up there with the big ones, the Kakadu the Wet Tropics and the Daintree and the Fraser Island.

I guess what I would like to say in conclusion and this draws me to your question, I'd like to put out a call as the Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation to all people in the conservation movement, to other groups and environmentally conscious voters out there in the community to get behind what will be one of Australia's greatest conservation achievements and that is the protection of the nature and culture of Cape York Peninsula.

At the moment, at least on one side of politics, I have seen the words, from the Prime Minister as to what the ALP is prepared to commit itself to. I haven't seen the Coalition's words, but what I would say is that there is one issue that is not a small matter, and that is if you can't sell Telstra to raise the dough to pay for what you say you are going to do, then there is no way in my investigations over the last week and a half and discussions with the Democrats, the Australian Greens and the Western Australian Greens, that Telstra is going to be sold in the next term of the Parliament. It is just not going to happen. This has to call into question the ability of the Coalition to fund not only the \$1.1 billion, by our calculations there is \$993 million, that won't happen when Telstra isn't sold that it also means that the funding, I think, at this point unless there is a dramatic turn in the next week and a half of the protection of one of Australia's great natural and cultural areas won't happen either.

So, in concluding and I hope that has answered your question. In conclusion I would like to say again that I am putting a call out to all environmentally conscious people in the community and the conservation movement to get right behind what will be one of Australia's greatest conservation achievements

J: Mr Downey, when Mr Howard announced his policy a couple of weeks ago in the Dandenong you were standing in front of a microphone saying that the Coalition policy was fantastic and that it puts both parties on equal footing. If in fact Mr Howard

has offered a similar amount of money for a Cape York agreement, where are you placed now?

JD: On the day that Mr Howard announced his policy I said three things. I can't help it if people just want to report one of the three, but the three were that there was some excellence in the content of the policy, there was significant uncertainty as to whether it could ever be delivered because of the link with Telstra and there was disappointment. The disappointment being the abandonment of the Three Mines Uranium policy which will almost certainly mean a big hole in the middle of Kakadu National Park.

Now, those three things were made very clear on the day. The next day we wrote to Mr Howard expressing our serious concern about the link with Telstra and the uncertainty that that meant for the funding of his environment package, he hasn't withdrawn that. As I say, if there is no change in the next two weeks then our view is that his environment package can't be delivered.

J: So therefore, you are still holding out to the last minute to decide where your allegiance will lie?

JD: What I will say is that first of all, I don't get a vote as to the position of the ACF in the election, that is up to my 37 elected councillors. They will be holding a ballot on Wednesday and we will make an announcement as to our position in the election on Thursday. At the moment I can say without pre-empting that announcement that as we stand here there is at least three major differences between the major parties as we go into this assessment process that we will complete in the next three days. They are certainty for the protection of one of Australia's great natural and cultural areas ie Cape York Peninsula, the issue of the abandonment of the Three Mines Uranium Policy which was confirmed yesterday with the Coalition's release of their Energy and Resources Policy and if you believe ERA Ltd that means a big hole in the middle of Kakadu National Park and the undeliverability of the Coalition's environment package while it stays linked to Telstra. Unless there is a change in the next week, that is the basis upon which we will be proceeding up to our announcement on Thursday.

J: Mr Downey, is Cape York in your view the defining environmental issue of this election campaign?

JD: I would have to say that the field has been narrowed down a fair bit. Look, I really think that we made it clear 12 months ago that Cape York Peninsula was going to be a priority of ours in the lead up to the election. On behalf of the Australian Conservation Foundation it has been a campaign that has at least been running for 20 years and moved through mining at Shellbourne Bay to the proposed space station in the late 1980s with The Wilderness Society, Starcke and Silver Plains etc, the land use strategy. It has been a long campaign. And for that reason, and coupled with its significant heritage values, it is definitely a priority.

As the field has got narrowed down and as we have got into the election, I think, from the ACF's perspective it has emerged as the major priority. But, let's not forget a big hole in the middle of Kakadu National Park is also a priority and whether or not \$993 million of a Party's policies can actually be delivered is a major issue as well.

J: You seemed to be saying before that you think Labor is better equipped to deliver on Cape York, than the Liberal Party or the Coalition.

JD: Well, you see, the Coalition has got three problems, until they unhook from Telstra they can't fund it - that is number one. Number two, they have got to get it past the Queensland National Party Federal Senators and Members, they have got to get it past Mr Borbidge who is on the record as saying 'That World Heritage is nothing but a disguise for a black land grab', when referring to Aboriginal people. And, thirdly, Mr Howard has got to hold some pretty, I would suggest, meaningful discussions with the mining industry to be able to fund the heritage protection in Cape York Peninsula.

For those three or four reasons, not the least of which is the funding issue, I think the ALP is in front in terms of being able to deliver what will be a great conservation outcome.

J: You almost seem to be advocating now a vote for Labor, don't you?

JD: Well I am not advocating a vote for Labor, I am drawing attention to the differences between the major parties. As I say, our announcement as to the election will be made on Thursday, I don't get a vote, there are 37 other people who do. But I know weighing heavily in their minds, from discussions over the last couple of days, the three things I have mentioned - Telstra, uranium, and Cape York - are weighing heavily in their thinking.

J: The Prime Minister was just saying that it is a big step forward. How far are we? Are we sort of half way there, a quarter of the way there? Is it achieving what sort of goals you would eventually like to achieve? It is a long process. Obviously, these talks started in 1994 ....

JD: Well the argy bargy over Cape York, really, in terms of land use decision making, has probably been going on for 20 years. To implement the agreement, I mean, there are a number of steps that have to be done - the funding is over four years. I think that is a reasonable amount of time to progress the agreement, it is a reasonable amount of time to get the pastoral industry security on a sustainable basis, to get the World Heritage assessments done, to get the nomination in access agreements for Aboriginal people sorted out. You know, we do have some time to go.

This is a significant agreement and I am certainly, from the ACF's perspective not going to suggest we rush the whole thing and get it over and done with in six months. But, you know, we can spend a bit of time.

J: What is the rough timetable? Are you looking at, say, by 2000 and have the issues of Cape York resolved?

JD: Look, I think, in the next term of the Parliament would be a fair timeframe, over the next three years. I mean we are going to continue our discussions with Aboriginal traditional owners and the Cattleman's Union. World Heritage assessments are not small matters in themselves again. I mean the World Heritage Bureau knocks back more listings than what it accepts at the moment and it has got to be done properly and it has to be rigorous and that takes a bit of time.

J: I don't know if it is possible, but can the Prime Minister respond to that as well? Does he expect it to be done in the term of the next Parliament?

PM: The World Heritage listing, do you mean?

J: To have the issues finalised - yes, the nomination?

PM: Oh, I think, that is a reasonable aspiration. As Jim said, this is a matter which has drawn certain people's attention now over a couple of decades and there has been some substantial progress already been made. The other thing is, I think, land care and sustainable land use has become, you know, so broadly accepted now flowing from the Landcare program and the interests of people in agriculture in Australia that we are not dealing with the same sort of issues, I think, we were dealing with half a dozen years ago.

In other words, I think, people now believe sustainability is important, it is an objective in itself, and if it is sustainable then proper land use management means that any heritage task becomes that much more achievable. And if you have got agreement to do this - you know, not just agreement, not just some resigned agreement, but an actual willingness to do this and to be party to an arrangement like this - I think, then it makes a very great difference about how quickly you can actually get these structures into place.

J: Can I ask Noel Pearson a question? This agreement involved a lot of trust building between all the parties. Do you think the approach taken here is applicable in, say, WA and the NT where some of the disputes between parties have perhaps been even more bitter there than they have been here?

NP: Yes. I want to say that I have got a great deal of optimism about this agreement and about the direction, I think, we are leading the country in. When we passed the Native Title Act in late 1993, following the High Court's decision on Mabo, I thought this is a really big opportunity we have in Cape York if we work hard. We have a big opportunity, we have an apparatus in place that provides for claims to the National Native Title Tribunal and for a process of regional agreement if we can get the major players to come to common positions.

So we had this apparatus put in place in late 1993 that provided so much promise, so much opportunity, so much cause for optimism. But I have got to say we are not going to capitalise on those opportunities and possibilities until the parties on the ground - State Governments, regional Governments, Local Governments, industry organisations, lobby groups, and Aboriginal people - are prepared to put the work, put the elbows to the wheel, to make these opportunities materialise.

And the Prime Minister said to me some time ago, that you know you are going to get agreement with these people if you front them, and you talk to them, and you come to compromises with them because that is the framework of the legislation that has been put in place.

So I gave that route a try because we had a litigation grinding on in the courts with the Wick action and I gave the option of getting agreement with the Cattleman's Union and the conservation groups, I gave that option a try, and I fronted at Musgrave - a small little out-station in the middle of Cape York Peninsula in the midst of all the



turmoil after the Queensland Government's announcement of the East Coast conservation zone, a great deal of anxiety, confusion, anger, frustration, and on the part of pastoralists and Aboriginal people. And I flew into Musgrave and I remember the charter flying around and there was one hundred Toyotas parked out the front. And I was about the only Aboriginal person in that gathering.

And by the end of that meeting we had an unequivocal resolution from the Cattlemen's Union that we were going to settle these things by negotiation. We were going to settle those things by negotiation founded on the principles that the Cattlemen's Union had set out a year earlier. Those principles were about mutual security, mutual benefit and mutual guarantee of lifestyle and culture.

And we got Rick Farley involved, and we worked over a two to three month period to put together the Heads of Agreement that we are now all committed to.

I have got to say it takes a great deal of work, it takes a great deal of goodwill and I am just very pleased that the kind of promise and faith and optimism I had about the Mabo decision and about the enactment of the Native Title Legislation, has yielded fruit - positive fruit - in Far North Queensland. And it is fruit that we, as organisations, on the ground are determined to hold, notwithstanding all of the political vagaries.

I have got to say that it is the route of agreement, rather than litigation is just one of the two routes available under the Native Title apparatus. We now need to go through the next step of formalising agreements between lease holders and traditional owners for access arrangements and for the settlement of these issues relating to Native Title.

Two weeks ago, there was a High Court Decision in respect of the Waanyi peoples in the Gulf of Carpentaria where the High Court was asked by the Aboriginal claimants and by the various parties to the litigation, asked to determine the question of pastoral leases and Native Title. And the High Court's view was that we have an apparatus in the Native Title Act that provides for mediation and negotiation. An apparatus that doesn't arbitrarily extinguish Native Title, it leaves that question for the courts to determine. But it provide a process of mediation and negotiation to settle these issues.

So, basically, the leadership of the High Court has been to .... you have an apparatus, you have a process, go and work out those things through compromise because if you are going to come through litigation to the High Court, there will be losers. If you are going to come through litigation in the High Court, there will be losers.

So there was a seven-nil judgment in favour of the negotiation and compromise route and I believe that we have identified in this Heads of Agreement, a compromise that will work best on the ground in Cape York Peninsula, that provides security for John Purcell's mob, for my mob and also secures the national interest in conservation heritage.

So, I think, that I suppose - not having participated in the debate down south and over the past two years, I have been buried up here trying to work on this agreement - am a bit dismayed about the cynicism that seems to pervade the country, about the

real possibilities that lie within our grasp, the real potentials and possibilities that lie within our grasp.

And I have got to say that those possibilities won't materialise unless the parties are prepared to butt heads and come to compromises and, I think, the Cape York agreement - coming around a torturous route to answer your question - I think this agreement can be a model for other areas in the country. But one of the great impediments to reaching the stage where we have reached, is the political reluctance of regional Governments.

I mean had we had intervention at the State Government level, we would never have reached the stage we have reached now. We have come to this point because for commercial, social, cultural reasons, just the relationship with people who live in Cowan, black and white people who have to live with each other in Cooktown. Those are the imperatives that have led to us coming to this compromise and if we had listened to the machinations and advice of people living in Brisbane, then I don't think we would have reached this stage.

And, I think, that it does involve leadership, it does involve leadership from the Aboriginal community, from the pastoral industry community, and importantly, I think, from the conservation movement. We have taught the conservationists something about coming to compromise because we are not going to secure a comprehensive conservation and sustainable development regime for the Peninsula until we understand, in the rest of Australia, that these things need to be done in cooperation with the land owners and the people who live in the region.

So I am extremely pleased to see that the country and I could never have imagined this could have been the case two or three years ago, and I am very pleased that here in Far North Queensland - notwithstanding anything that might happen outside of the region - that we have reached this state of affairs with the Cattlemen's Union, The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

I think that issues in the Kimberleys in Western Australia, elsewhere in Queensland, that we provide at an example of the way to settle these land use questions.

I suppose the issue that I am most concerned about in terms of the implementation of this agreement, relate to two questions. One is, what will happen with mining in a few key regions in Cape York Peninsula. They are really key questions of great concern to the Aboriginal community.

Mining at Shellbourne Bay, in particular, is an issue of great concern. We would be concerned that all political parties commit themselves to ruling out mining on Shellbourne Bay.

Secondly, the other question we are very concerned about is the arbitrary wholesale extinguishment of Native Title in pastoral leases. We believe that the question of Native Title in pastoral leases can and should be addressed as the High Court said it could be through the apparatus of the Native Title Act, through mediation and negotiation.

I am extremely concerned by comments from Richard Court that there is a Coalition commitment to wholesale extinguishment of Native Title in pastoral leases. I am also

concerned about Mr Fischer's recent statements that seem to confirm the existence of this hidden agenda.

I can tell you that the Cattlemen showed the faith in Cape York Peninsula that we can settle this question of Native Title through negotiation and we accepted that good faith. And it was an agreement that came to pass notwithstanding the legal changes and the political changes. Like one week, we had a negative decision from Justice Drummond - this was about three weeks ago. Justice Drummond said, 'There is no Native Title in pastoral leases'. And I thought, oh, shit. John Purcell is going to walk away from this agreement now. He has got what he wants, he is gone. But, no, he said, 'We are sticking by the terms of this agreement'.

The next week, the High Court ruled that the whole question is still alive. The whole question of Native Title and pastoral leases was still alive. So I immediately wrote to John and said, listen, we are sticking to the terms of this agreement, there is no kind of grabbing ours and running. And I have got to say that I want to publicly commit myself to sticking by the terms of this agreement, notwithstanding the legal and political changes that might happen. Thank you.

J: I am just wondering if I could ask you Mr Purcell how does this compare with the regional proposal of the Goss Government that involved 11 properties? Is this a wider thing now, are there more properties involved and will this make the task more complicated, can you get their agreement?

JP: Yes, just to answer your question. Obviously, the East Coast wilderness as proposed by Premier Goss prior to the election on 15 July, is something that we couldn't come to agreement amongst the parties, it was set aside. But we have been able to resolve to our satisfaction the situation as far as the people we represent and the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Lands. But what the attitude of the incoming Government is on that zone I don't know.

But I guess in common with others, I would like to address the broader question about this agreement. The first thing I would say is we are not about party politics, we are not about saying this side is better than the other side - we are about an outcome for the people within the Cape York Peninsula area.

And as Noel Pearson has said, we have achieved - by the signing of this Heads of Agreement - a situation that spells out the principles of the pastoralists, of the Aboriginal communities, and of the environmentalists, that is above politics and is above the decision of the High Court, the Federal Court, or any other court of appeal.

The cattle industry in Cape York Peninsula is currently in a state of decline. The signing of this agreement, in my view, brings a much brighter future for the cattle industry. What we have got to recognise in this country is that we have got to generate export income and we have got to pay our bills internationally and, therefore, we have got to have export earning capacity.

Cape York Peninsula with its close proximity to South East Asia offers that to the cattle industry and if we can exercise live cattle trade through the port at Weipa, that is certainly one way to go, and that is supplemented by the increase in consumption of manufactured and processed beef out of this country.

The other thing I would like to say, probably the most contentious issue that we have had to face in this whole debate, is the question of World Heritage. World Heritage, in my view, has a place but the statements that have been made irresponsibly by some people that the whole of the Cape was going to be locked up and put under World Heritage is just so much rot.

The process of achieving registration of World Heritage, has to go through a torturous program. There are areas of significant conservation values in the Cape, we recognise that, and they should be protected. I think you have also got to realise that there is a very firm commitment in the Heads of Agreement that outlines that World Heritage itself does not necessarily mean the exclusion of the livestock industry. In our notes accompanying that Heads of Agreement, multiple land use is certainly spelt out.

Now just in conclusion, I think, that what this has done is brought together parties with diverging views, we have done it in a very short period of time, whereas the courts haven't been able to decide it, whereas the politicians - with all due respect - have not also been able to tie it together. I think that what we have done is set in place a principle that will have application in other areas. But the factors in other areas are going to be very different than that in Cape York.

The Heads of Agreement that we have come to in Cape York Peninsula, address the various problems and challenges that we have got to face in the Cape and, I think, that all of the signatories have said here today that we are all clearly going to stick that agreement and the safeguards for all of the parties are built in.

And I would just, again, like to put on record the fact that all of us entered these discussions in good faith and with trust. In spite of mischief from outside sources that tried to divide the signatories, we are rock solid on what we have signed and there is a lot of mischief based on misunderstanding and I hope that we can get the message out to people that this is not about locking up the Cape, it is not about locking out the beef cattle industry. But, rather, it is something that we have put together for the well-being of the people in the Cape and that is our bottom line and we are happy to party to the agreement.

- J: Mr Purcell, would you agree with Mr Pearson that this could be a model for other areas of Australia?
- JP: Yes, I do. But I would again agree with Noel that particular circumstances in the Cape will probably differ to circumstances that exist in the Gulf region of Queensland, or in the Kimberleys. There are different players, there are different attitudes and there are also different problems.
- J: Mr Keating, can I just ask you a question on another subject? Mr Howard has today made an enormous pitch for families with a \$1 billion tax bonus for families. Can Labor match this?
- PM: Well that is cynical and unscrupulous because he is happy to play a confidence trick on Australian families with promises he knows he can't possibly fund. He has no hope of ever delivering and to be doing this at this point in his political career, in desperation to try and win an election, says nothing I think about the integrity of him or the Liberal Party.

J: So is this a last minute ditch by him to grab the family vote?

PM: Yes, well it is a very late policy speech and it is very much a last minute ditch around a cynical ploy that has no chance of, ever, coming to reality.

J: Can I just ask Mr Purcell another question? Does the Native Title Act still need amending then to clear up what have been called anomalies, difficulties, with regard to pastoral leases?

JP: My understanding is, and I am not into the politics of course, but both the Government and the Opposition have said that the Native Title does require some amendments.

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