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# PRIME MINISTER

2 June 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW - SMITH FAMILY APPEAL LAUNCH  
HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY**

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**JOURNALIST:**

Could we ask you first for your reaction to the strong turn-out yesterday at the Melbourne gun rally? Does that concern you at all?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, I understand how strongly some people feel about this issue and I've always acknowledged that there are a lot of law abiding people who are going to be affected by these new laws, and people have a perfect right in a democracy to lawfully and peacefully demonstrate and it was a lawful peaceful demonstration and I compliment the people for that, but my attitude remains completely unchanged.

The Commonwealth will be pushing for the implementation of the laws agreed at the Police Ministers' Conference as soon as possible. Some States have already acted, I hope the other States act as soon as humanly possible. I do understand how people feel. I also know that the great majority of the Australian people support the stand that I have taken and other governments across party lines have taken, and whilst I understand the views of people who dissent, the Government's position will not alter.

**JOURNALIST:**

What's your response to the Commonwealth Bank has lowered its main home loan interest rates. Michael Egan is taking credit for that and saying that other banks will

follow, and there'll be a mortgage price war. What's your reaction, are you expecting the other banks to follow suit?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, I hope they do. This has happened because of competition and it is a very powerful message that ought to go through other economic areas that when you have competition the consumer benefits. So, in the months and years ahead, if people resist changes that will give more competition, they ought to remember that were it not for competition in the financial sector, housing interest rates would not now look as though they were about to go down, perhaps they might look as though they were about to go up. It is unqualifiedly good news for Australian families. Nothing is more likely to take the financial pressure off the generality of Australian families more than a cut in housing interest rates. It's the sort of ultimate in good news for the generality of Australian families to have cuts in interest rates. I compliment the Commonwealth Bank on what it has done. It's done it for business reasons. That is how a competitive market should operate. I hope other banks follow.

**JOURNALIST:**

Just on the Winter Warmth Appeal, you said that your Government would not be walking away, the budget imperatives would be in place, but that you would stand by Australia's poor. Can you confirm that?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes, that's what I said. I've made it clear all along. I made it clear in Opposition, and I've made it clear since being in Government that we will honour commitments to the genuinely needy in the Australian community and no budget imperatives are going to stop us making proper provisions for those people who are genuinely needy in our community.

**JOURNALIST:**

The events in Darwin. Do you find it depressing that these acts are still happening?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, I don't think anybody ever suggested that the passage of laws would guarantee that further crimes would not be committed. That would be ridiculous. But what the passage of laws will do is to minimise the danger from the widespread possession of weapons and it is the responsibility of governments, notwithstanding the fact that some people will be inconvenienced and some people lawfully doing something they enjoy will be prevented from doing that. But it is a question of the greater good of the greater number prevailing over the convenience of a smaller number of people in the community. I'm sorry about that, and I apologise to law abiding people who are going to be effected but there is overwhelming public support. We have an opportunity in this country not to go down the American path. I mean, it is impossible for the United States authorities to do anything about the control of guns in that country. It's been

allowed to go for too long and the gun lobby has become too powerful and politicians are intimidated out of doing anything. I am determined that that will not happen in this country, and that is why I have taken the stand that I have.

**JOURNALIST:**

Are you expecting to face a by-election with the candidate in the seat of Lindsay - Mrs Kelly's New Zealand residency? Is she going to have to resign?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, that's a matter you ought to address to her, but let me say this that Jackie Kelly secured a swing of 12% in a seat traditionally held by the Labor Party. The defeated Labor member has apparently squealed by lodging a complaint with the court of disputed returns. I can't, for reasons you'll understand, say more than that. I think the sense of fair play and justice of the people of Lindsay if there were another ballot would assert itself. It's always a tough call if something like that arises for an incumbent Government, but Jackie's a great warrior for the people of Lindsay and if there were to be another election I know she would attack it with very great gusto.

Thanks.