



PRIME MINISTER

7 August 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD, MP
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW - SYDNEY**

E & OE

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister it's quite an incredible welcome back for our athletes.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is a fantastic occasion and I just want to say again how proud all Australians are of the tremendous achievements of this team. It was an achievement that's surpassed any others and every single member of the team is entitled to feel the pride, I'm sure they have, and to enjoy the adulation and the affection of a very grateful and a very proud nation.

JOURNALIST:

Will the Federal Government guarantee more funds ... ?

PRIME MINISTER:

We will guarantee, absolutely, to meet in full the commitments that we made before the last election. Any suggestion that we are going to cut funding for Olympic sport is wrong. We won't do that. We will, obviously, want to play our full part in ensuring that Australia's performance in the Year 2000 is equal, if not better, than the achievement in 1996 and that means an effort, not only from the Government, but also an effort from the corporate community.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

I beg your pardon?

JOURNALIST:

Are you going to say anything about Arthur Tunstall's comments?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh look I'm not going to talk about that.

JOURNALIST:

Did you find what he said embarrassing though? I mean, ... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm simply not going to get into that?

JOURNALIST:

So the word is, there won't be cuts towards Olympic funds?

PRIME MINISTER:

There certainly won't be no. There certainly will not be.

JOURNALIST:

Will you maintain levels of funding ...

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, yes we will.

JOURNALIST:

Do you guarantee ... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

We will maintain in full the commitment that we made before the last election, which was to maintain the programme or athlete preparation right through to the games. I mean we're not just doing it, obviously, in this year's budget and then do something sneaky in the next one. Look, we

are giving an unambiguous commitment to maintain the funding that was previously committed. I spelt that out before the election and there won't be any backtracking and there won't be any cutting of Olympic funding. But I do want to take the opportunity of saying that we need and the teams need and the Olympic Committee needs very strong corporate support and very strong community support. It is not just the responsibility of the Government, it is also the responsibility of the entire community.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible)...

PRIME MINISTER:

I haven't spoken, I'm sorry yes, I just heard the bloke on the left.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

Would you like to repeat the question? You've now got me utterly and comprehensively confused.

JOURNALIST:

Has Mr Carr made any requests for help from the Federal Government to help with security or transport as yet?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I haven't had any direct requests from him or any direct conversations, but I am certain that he will do that and it is equally certain that I will co-operate in every appropriate way with Mr Carr. We had a general discussion some weeks ago about preparations for the games. Obviously we'll have a look at the security situation. There's clearly a role for the Federal Government, there's also clearly a role for the State Government. I think there's also a need to understand that there is an Australian way of handling security problems. We are Australia, we're not any other country, we have our own culture, our own tradition, we have our own style. We want the games of the new millennium to be an event that people remember, enjoy and feel free and happy about and we've got to keep that in mind in relation to any of the security aspects of preparation and surveillance while the games are actually on.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well there's no doubt that the firmer the budget, the more likely it is that there could be another interest rate cut. It's ultimately in the hands of the monetary authorities and not directly in the hands of the Government. But one of the virtues of having a tight budget is that you're more likely to cut interest rates. I have no doubt that one of the reasons the Reserve Bank cut official interest rates last week was the knowledge that the Government was taking a firm approach to the budget. If we had adopted the advice of our opponents in relation to the budget I don't believe interest rates would have been cut last week.

JOURNALIST:

... (inaudible) ...

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh, people in my situation always like them to be bigger.

Thank you.