



PRIME MINISTER

27 August, 1996

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

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JOURNALIST:

Industry groups say that the Government can't guarantee that elderly people won't have to sell their homes to get admittance to a nursing home, how do you respond to that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'll tell you what I'll guarantee and that is that this proposal will be just as fair and as reasonably implemented as the proposal for hostels which it copied.

JOURNALIST:

Are you willing to make any compromise at all Mr Howard?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh no, no. There's no need to make any basic changes to what's being proposed, none at all and any suggestion that there's going to be any change as I saw in one of the papers this morning is just not right. Look, this is a very fair proposal and can I say again it is exactly the same proposal that the Labor Party implemented almost ten years ago with our support. The difference is that we didn't nit-pick and try and politically point score and try and scare elderly people which is what the Labor Party is doing in relation to our proposal. If they were honest, if they weren't hypocritical they'd put their hand up and say 'Costello is doing what Keating did nine years ago. We supported what Keating did nine years ago, we ought to support what he's doing now'.

JOURNALIST:

But Prime Minister, ... since the system was introduced ... there's been elderly people who have been forced to sell their homes to get into hostels.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I can only repeat what I said earlier. Okay.

JOURNALIST:

... the opinion polls seem to indicate that although people think the Budget was tough and may not necessarily help them they do believe it was good for the country ...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't normally get euphoric about any opinion polls but I am sure that most Australians see it as a fair but strong Budget and that is what they really wanted. Australians understand an argument when it is put to them fairly and reasonably. They knew we had to take some difficult decisions, but they see the decisions as having been fairly spread across all sections of the Australian community. I'm very proud of the egalitarian character of the first Coalition Budget. It's a Budget for middle Australia, it's a Budget that spreads the pain around. It's a Budget that has protected the really vulnerable. But most importantly, it's a Budget for future generations and that's what we ought to be about.

JOURNALIST:

What message does it deliver to the Senate Parties?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well that's something that I don't want to get into windy rhetoric about. What I'm going to do with the Senate is to talk and encourage my Ministerial colleagues to talk in a sensible, calm way with the Democrats and with the Independents and with the Greens. We need two more votes in order to get certain measures through, I understand that. You can have a majority of 42 in the House of Representatives but you need two more to get things through in the Senate. I want to talk and explain this to the minor parties in the Senate and I hope at the end of the day they will pass it because it is a fair Budget and we were elected with a big majority in the lower House and I would hope at the end of the day whatever reservations they may have about some of the particular measures that they will say, well they have a big majority, the Budget seems to have been well received. In those circumstances the good thing, the smart thing, is to let it go through and get stuck into them on something else.

Thank you.