



**PRIME MINISTER**

**3 SEPTEMBER 1996**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW, ULIGA DOCK, MAJURO**

**E & OE.....**

**JRNLS:**

Mr Howard, the President of the Marshall Islands, Mr Kabua, indicated he was intending to raise with you Australia's position at the climate change convention, the last meeting imposing a legally enforceable target for greenhouse reductions, arguing that that Marshall Islands, being only a couple of metres by sea level, was the most vulnerable. Did he raise it and what did you say to him?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No he didn't but the issue may come up during the course of the conference. I don't mind if it does but it wasn't raised during the bilateral discussion earlier today.

**JRNLS:**

What do you say to low lying countries, atoll countries most at risk from rising sea levels about Australia's position?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I say a number of things. I say that I understand fully their concern and the importance of climate change to countries like the Marshall Islands. I also point to the good record of Australia, the codes that we have put in place, the voluntary arrangements that we have established with some of the major companies such as BHP and CRA and I'm very happy to defend the position of Australia. The position that we took at the Berlin Conference was totally justified. In order to have a concerted, world wide and effective push against global warming you need the co-operation of all countries and you don't need mandatory targets that

tend to discriminate more heavily against countries such as Australia than they do against many of the other industrialised countries.

**JRNLSST:**

Could you indicate what were some of the issues that were discussed with the President and your response to those?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well it was very much a courtesy discussion. The meatier aspects of the meeting will emerge when we have the Leaders' Retreat after the formal opening this afternoon. I emphasise the importance that I attached, given this is my first visit overseas, to re-establishing the good relationship between Australia and the countries of the forum. I think more will come later. I'm still very much on a learning curve as far as this is concerned and I want to do a bit of listening. Australia of course is the largest country in the forum and in those circumstances it is important that we listen as well as give our views.

**JRNLSST:**

You're listening but aren't you also trying to give a message to these countries that they should be more fiscally responsible?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I think the right thing to do if you have messages to deliver is to deliver those messages to the people you want to receive the messages before you start talking about them. The conference gets under way this afternoon. There's a Leaders' Retreat and I will have plenty of opportunity during the course of that retreat to express my views and the views of the Australian Government on the importance of economic reform and economic change because in the long run it's reform rather than aid which will determine whether or not a country is prosperous.

**JRNLSST:**

Prime Minister, the President yesterday again reiterated he's still actively considering the notion of using some already contaminated atolls as low level nuclear waste dumps. What's your reaction to that?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I want to know the attitude of the island states. You're talking about the President...

**JRNLSST:**

The Marshall Islands.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes. I think I'd want to know the attitude of countries in the region. I mean we are very sensitive to any suggestion of the use, and those reports that appeared in one Australian newspaper yesterday were of some concern to us.

**JRNLSST:**

What do you think about the American record here on nuclear testing. They conducted many tests here between the, after the war to the late 1950s. There's been a tremendous impact on human health not to mention obliterating some island habitats. What do you think about the American record here on nuclear weapons?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I'm not going to get into a retrospective condemnation of the United States in relation to nuclear testing or indeed anything else. I'm more interested in the future.

**JRNLSST:**

What are the major issues that you'd be looking to discuss here then?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Ways in which we can build a more secure economic and political future for the members of the forum collectively. Thank you.

ends