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**PRIME MINISTER**

7 SEPTEMBER 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON. JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW, NSW GENERAL MEETING OF  
STATE COUNCIL - ST MARY'S BAND CLUB**

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

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Beazley intends to oppose measures in the Budget. What is your response to that?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

If you really believe in lower interest rates you will let the Budget go through unscathed. There's a direct link over time between the size of the Budget deficit and the level of housing interest rates. I can't think of anything that's more likely to slow down further interest rate reductions over time, than people mucking around with the Budget.

**JOURNALIST:**

How far will you be pushed, Mr Howard, before it becomes a possibility of a double dissolution?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Oh look I'm not contemplating a double dissolution. It's not in my range of contemplation.

**JOURNALIST:**

How much trouble will you have to have with the Telstra sale, before that becomes an option?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I'm not considering a double dissolution, I'm continuing to advocate getting the Telstra legislation through, advocate the cause of that through the minor parties in the Senate and I hope that we can be successful, but I don't take anything for granted. I'll continue to talk to them and deal with them and listen to their questions and respond to their concerns, and I'm hopeful but I don't take anything for granted. But as far as a double dissolution is concerned, I'm not interested in a double dissolution, I'm eager to have three years and I think the Australian public is eager that we have three years and probably some more after that as well, but that'll be a matter for them to decide in three years' time or two and a half years' time.

**JOURNALIST:**

Will Senator Colston's defection make it easier for you to get your package through? Have you speaking to him over the last few days?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I haven't spoken to him, no. Some of my colleagues I think have spoken to him, I don't know how many. I'm not going to publicly speculate about how any individual is going to vote or how the Democrats are going to vote, the only person who can say how Senator Colston is going to vote, is Senator Colston. The only person who can speak for Senator Harradine, is Senator Harradine, and the only people who can speak for the Australian Democrats are the Australian Democrats. And I want to make it clear I am not going to get into the business of publicly ruminating about or speculating as to how any of these people are going to vote. If you want to know how they're going to vote, you should address your questions to them.

**JOURNALIST:**

Prime Minister, the appointment, of a Labor Minister to head of SOCOG, how do you feel about that?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I don't want to make any comment about it at this stage beyond saying again that to me, total co-operation between the Labor Government of New South Wales and the Liberal National Party Government federally is important, to Australia having and Sydney having a successful Olympic Games in the year 2000. The Australian public wants a bi-partisan apolitical approach on both sides, on both sides, to the Olympic Games and I will talk to some people on the SOCOG Board, I'll talk to the Premier, I'll naturally talk to Mr Coates the head of the Australian Olympic Committee, I'll do everything I can to make sure that the Olympic Games of 2000 in Sydney are a uniting experience for the Australian people and an opportunity to showcase the wonders of Australia and the beauty of Sydney to the rest of the world.

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Howard, will you rule out meeting, or having Mr Downer meeting the Dalai Lama?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I don't have anything to add to what I've said before in relation to that. I place a very high store on human rights and naturally I meet people according to my assessment of what is in the best interests of Australia.

**JOURNALIST:**

How do you feel at the moment about the possibility of a by-election?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Oh there's a possibility of a by-election, because the defeated Labor member who was thrown out with a swing of more than 12 per cent, by Jackie Kelly who's with me this morning, has gone to the Court of Disputed Returns and the Judge has reserved his judgement. And if a by-election is ordered, because of a technicality, then we'll fight very hard to retain the seat. It will be a tough fight, but we've got a great member in Jackie Kelly. She's asked more questions of the Government than any other member of Parliament in the six months that she's been in Parliament and if ever anybody represents the aspirations of western Sydney, it's Jackie Kelly.

**JOURNALIST:**

(inaudible)

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It will be a tough, hard fight. It was a Labor stronghold until Jackie Kelly came in like a breath of fresh air with the policies of the Coalition in March and we'll be asking the people of Lindsay, if there is a by-election ordered, to confirm their decision of March and to vote for the future rather than the failed past.

**JOURNALIST:**

(inaudible)

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I didn't hear a word of that I'm sorry.

**JOURNALIST:**

(inaudible)

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I can't every imagine either Donald McDonald or John Valder not getting a say.  
Thank you.