



PRIME MINISTER

8 September 1996

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD, MP
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW, RADISSON OBSERVATION CITY HOTEL, WA**

E & OE

JOURNALIST:

On Sunday, this morning, Simon Crean was saying that Amanda Vanstone had predicted that unemployment wouldn't be below 8% before the end of the century. Do you think...

PRIME MINISTER:

No I don't think she said that, but you'd better go and check the record.

JOURNALIST:

Simon Crean's also said that your claims about interest rates are looking good is actually a bit of a furphy and the Budget is going to be cutting production and damaging interest rates. What do you say to him?

PRIME MINISTER:

Nonsense. The bottom line of the interest rate debate is that anybody who hacks into the savings made in the Budget is playing with interest rate fire, they are playing with the possibility that we will have higher rather than lower interest rates.

JOURNALIST:

Any predictions of unemployment by the end of the decade?

PRIME MINISTER:

The only prediction I make is that you will never get unemployment down in this country until you fix the labour market and you lift economic growth on a permanent basis.

JOURNALIST:

You'd be more optimistic though than 8%?

PRIME MINISTER:

I will be far more optimistic about unemployment if the Senate passes the Work Place Relations Bill and the other economic reforms that will enable us to run a higher rate of economic growth.

JOURNALIST:

Are you confident that you will be able to convince the minor parties to get on board with that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we're working on it. I'm not going to make any predictions on that. I don't speak for the minor parties and it would...

JOURNALIST:

But you do speak to them, don't you?

PRIME MINISTER:

Of course I speak to them - regularly and courteously - but what they do is a matter for them to decide and I always think it's silly in politics to presume to speak for somebody else who's not in your party.

JOURNALIST:

If you don't get your Industrial Relations Bill through as you would like it, does that mean that unemployment might go up?

PRIME MINISTER:

What I'm saying to you is that one of the ways of reducing unemployment in this country is to have a freer labour market. That's what I'm saying to you - quite precisely.

JOURNALIST:

...that you're now Prime Minister, last year...

PRIME MINISTER:

That's a fair, you know...well I think it's a strange assumption.

JOURNALIST:

Have you noticed a change in the feeling among WA Liberals from this year to last year?

PRIME MINISTER:

I've always had very good relations with the WA Liberals. But there is justifiable pride in Western Australia at what was achieved here in the last election.

JOURNALIST:

The Age has reported on a green paper for Federal Cabinet on a possible paedophile register, two versions ... is that sort of an area that Cabinet or the Federal Government ...relied on?

PRIME MINISTER:

I understand that that is some kind of working paper within the Attorney-General's Department. Look that's going on all the time. Anything in that area would be decided by Ministers. Ministers make policy not bureaucrats.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister these initiatives you cast your eye over on the plane on the way over to do with native title, are these new initiatives and can you give us any more detail on exactly what...

PRIME MINISTER:

No I can't, I can't do that. What I can tell you is that we proposed fair, sensible amendments that will make the Native Title Act more workable.

JOURNALIST:

It's clear to say though isn't it that the Western Australian Government has set the bar quite a bit higher than the rest of the States with regard to native title. Do you think you were ever going to be able to make Richard Court and the Western Australian Government happy with relation to native title?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think we're talking about the matter in a very constructive, positive fashion. I understand that the Native Title Act has, proportionately speaking, a heavier impact on Western Australia than any other part of Australia. I've always been conscious of that and Richard Court has every reason to express concern about that.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard ... the gun control legislation is not through State Parliament here yet?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh I'm sure it will.

JOURNALIST:

Western Australia is moving much more slowly than other states on gun control.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm sure that it will go through. I really am.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Court has indicated that there could be an election before Christmas, what do you think of his prospects?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm sure whenever the election is held he will win but it will be a tough fight because of the redistribution. He deserves to win, he's run a very good Government in the interests of all Western Australians and he'll have my total support. Whether the election is early is entirely a matter for him.

JOURNALIST:

Would you offer yourself to come over and help campaign?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, he calls the shots on campaigns, he's the Premier, he will decide when the election is held, he will decide the respective...

JOURNALIST:

...like to...(inaudible)...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look, I will do whatever I'm asked. I'm always ready to do that.

ends