

3

# REHAME

URGENT MEDIA TRANSCRIPT

# NINE NETWORK

## SUNDAY

Please acknowledge  
"NINE NETWORK'S SUNDAY PROGRAM"  
when extracting any material

Broadcast Date: February 9, 1997

Interview with Prime Minister John Howard

IF NOT RECEIVED IN LEGIBLE FORM PLEASE CONTACT REHAME AUSTRALIA  
CANBERRA ON (61 6) 273 6777 or 0419 418 497

**NATIONAL NINE NETWORK SUNDAY 9.30 AM  
9TH FEBRUARY, 1997.**

**DISCUSSION ON CURRENT FEDERAL ISSUES AND THE  
DIRECTION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE  
UPCOMING YEAR. INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER  
JOHN HOWARD.**

---

**JIM WALEY - ANNOUNCER:**

After his almost teflon coated first ten months in office, 1997 is shaping up as a tough one for the Prime Minister. He's under pressure to sort out the mess over the High Court's decision on native title and protect pastoral leases from Aboriginal claims. The budget has blown out by nearly three billion dollars. And the Government has failed to make any impact on unemployment. And Mr Howard's been under fire in Parliament this week over when he learnt of the storm clouds gathering around resigning senator, Bob Woods.

The Prime Minister is in our Sydney studio this morning and here to talk with him, Sunday's political editor, Laurie Oakes. Good morning Laurie.

**LAURIE OAKES - PRESENTER:**

Morning Jim.

Prime Minister, welcome to the programme.

**JOHN HOWARD - PRIME MINISTER:**

It's great to be back.

**OAKES:**

When you appeared on our first program last year you launched the Liberal Party's election campaign. A lot's happened since then.

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoyne NSW 2047  
Tel: 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 6388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 6777 or 273 6778 Fax 06 273 6888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehamem@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia

**HOWARD:**

It has.

**OAKES:**

You had an almost trouble free first year, you were riding high in the polls, but last week a news poll showed suddenly that Labor was narrowing the gap. Why do you think that happened?

**HOWARD:**

Well, another poll... that Morgan Poll, went the other way. Look, I'm not ... I don't know and whether it will last, I don't know either. I don't spend all of my life looking at polls. I didn't when I was Opposition leader, even less so now as the Prime Minister. Poll ratings can ebb and flow and politicians who react to them all the time, I think, in the end don't make very good decisions.

**OAKES:**

Well, today's headlines are still about the Bob Woods, Roxanne Cameron affair. That's obviously not the way you would have liked to have started your second year?

**HOWARD:**

No, but the important thing is that the priorities of my Government are, as I outlined at the beginning of Parliament, that's help for families, helping small business and continuing to grapple with the very hard to solve problem of unemployment. And they'll continue to be the priorities of the Government. These other things will come and go and I don't really want to get in to comment about personal affairs involving any members of Parliament.

**OAKES:**

You mentioned families there. Your Government talks about family values, you talked about that yesterday to the Anglican Church. Doesn't that make this incident embarrassing for the Government?

**HOWARD:**

What we talked about in the election campaign, let's get it straight, was providing help for families. I didn't run around the country saying that, you know, one side of politics was the, you know, the epitome of virtue and the others weren't. I mean, I would never run a sort of a moralistic campaign. I think that's ridiculous and I think it's seen as ridiculous by the community.

But what I have said and I'll continue to say without apology is that my Government is about providing help for families and taking pressure off families. That's what I ran on the election campaign and that's what our policies will be continued to do. Our family tax initiative, the help for families for medical insurance costs coming in on the first of July, the other changes we've made to give parents more choice in relation to the schooling of their children. These are policies built on just a pragmatic desire to help families and the remain very central elements in my Government's policies.

**OAKES:**

Do you see the private life or the personal life of a member or a minister ever relevant to their public duty?

**HOWARD:**

It's my view very strongly that it only becomes relevant where it directly interferes with the performance of their public duty or in some way it involves the tax payer being done in the eye. Then I think it is a perfectly understandable thing that it should come into the public domain.

**OAKES:**

For example, it's been said that a reason that Bob Woods didn't get into your ministry was his private life. Is that true?

**HOWARD:**

I didn't choose my ministry with reference to any private considerations, no.

**OAKES:**

Do you have any standards in that area that you expect your ministers to abide by? Or is it possible to have standards like that?

**HOWARD:**

I think it's very possible for a hu... one human being to sit in too strict a moral judgement of another human being. I think I have an understanding of the strengths and the foibles of human nature as good as any person in this country. I expect individuals in my Government and in my ministry to behave correctly and behave properly, but I don't like some kind of threatening father confessor seek to sit on [sic] judge... sit in judgement on them, and I don't think the Australian public would want me to do that.

**OAKES:**

What about the suggestion that Roxanne Cameron should be moved from her job with Joe Hockey?

**HOWARD:**

I don't know anything about that Laurie. And really, there's a feeding frenzy of the tabloids at the moment on this and I don't want to further throw live flesh into the water to make it go along.

**OAKES:**

You told Parliament you forgot you were briefed last September by the Attorney-General on a police investigation into those allegations about Bob Woods' expenses. But you're a politician who has a very good memory ...

**HOWARD:**

I do.

**OAKES:**

I mean, do you see that people would be sceptical about that?

**HOWARD:**

Well, they shouldn't be. I'm sorry if they are because I plain forgot and look, I had no motive. I mean, if I were being dishonest, if I were deliberately sort of suppressing that, what was the motive? There was none. I mean normally when people in public life fudge the truth or lie they have a motive to protect themselves. I had no motive. I was asked out of the blue after talking about the republic, I was asked by Ray did I know of the investigation ... and the answer I actually gave was quite true.

**OAKES:**

That's right. I mean, you could have rested on that.

**HOWARD:**

There was nothing dishonest. I mean, there was nothing dishonest ... I said that Woods had told me ten days ago, that was in fact the first occasion that Woods and I had discussed it. And the briefing that I got from Daryl Williams months earlier had simply been to the effect that a complaint had been made. He said, I don't know whether it's true or false, sometimes these complaints are made and they run into the sand and nothing happens. I mean, politicians are vulnerable to these sorts of complaints from disgruntled people and that's ...

I mean, whatever the reason is, I didn't recall it when I gave that answer on Ray Martin. I didn't recall it until my attention was drawn to it by Daryl Williams, presumably because of the question asked in the Senate by Faulkner. And once it had been brought to my attention and I recollected it I corrected it at the earliest possible moment.

Now I just ask people to accept that I didn't remember it, and there was .... I had no motive for cover up ...

**OAKES:**

I suppose the obvious question is, do you know feel a bit more sympathy for Carmen Lawrence?

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney: Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoynes NSW 2047  
Tel: 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 6388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 6777 or 273 6778 Fax 06 273 6888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehamem@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia

**HOWARD:**

The Carmen Lawrence thing was that despite the fact that eight or ten of her own colleagues gave a different version, she still denied it. I mean, once my attention was drawn to the fact that I hadn't recollected it, I didn't go on denying it, did I?

**OAKES:**

No you didn't.

**HOWARD:**

I went in there and fessed up. So there's a vast difference. I mean, I've been completely open, I'm sorry it happened but I'm human, I forgot thin... I forgot something. No doubt there are plenty of my opponents who've never forgotten anything in their lives.

**OAKES:**

What about today's reports that Michael Cobb, the National Party backbencher, is also under investigation. Have you been briefed on that?

**HOWARD:**

I was told about that last year by Daryl Williams, I think in about August. And once again it's a continuing police investigation. I think the Attorney-General mentioned it to me on one other occasion as well. There's a continuing police investigation, I understand Michael Cobb's denied the allegations. He, like Bob Woods, is entitled to a presumption of innocence.

**OAKES:**

Was he, like Bob Woods, raided by the AFP?

**HOWARD:**

I am told he was, and I'm also told that that was reported in the local newspapers in Dubbo at the time, but I don't have any other details and I discussed it with Tim Fischer and with the Attorney-General and it's not appropriate to say any more because these are allegations, nothing has been

**HOWARD CONT/D:**

proved, no charges have been laid. Politicians are particularly vulnerable to these sorts of things, and I think it's only fair to the two men concerned to just give them the presumption of innocence to which you or any other Australian citizen would be entitled in similar circumstances.

**OAKES:**

Well let's go to some more lasting issues. Unemployment's becoming a serious problem for your government, isn't it? What are you going to do about it?

**HOWARD:**

Well unemployment has been a serious problem in Australia now for about ten years, and the first thing I want to say to the Australian people again is that we did inherit a big unemployment problem. The Labor Party had thirteen years to fix it. They pushed it to a post-Depression high of eleven per cent and we inherited eight and a half per cent. And it really is ridiculous of them to thump the table and say why, on earth haven't you fixed it in eleven months?

You'll only get unemployment down if you have sustainably higher economic growth, and if you remove the impediments in areas such as the labour market, and if you give a fresh injection of life to small business. They're the three ways of getting unemployment down. Now, growth is growing [sic]... is going quite well. Our labour market reforms have only just started, and they have to be given time to work. And the ... the ... some of the labour market reforms don't come into operation until the first of March...

**OAKES:**

Yes.

**HOWARD:**

... and we must be given time in relation to those for the... for the effect of those reforms to flow through.



**HOWARD CONT/D:**

Small business, we've done a lot and we've got more coming. Later this month I'll be announcing a comprehensive response to the task force, chaired by Charlie Bell, into small business deregulation. We will see on the first of July a very, very generous liberalisation of the capital gains tax for small business. It'll mean you can sell a small business for anything up to five million dollars and invest the proceeds into any other small business if you like without paying capital gains tax. And that is a huge in... that will be a huge injection of life into small business.

They've had three interest rate cuts. Although I would like to see more of the interest rate cuts passed on by the banks to small business. I think they're lagging a bit there.

**OAKES:**

But can we go on with all these people in the dole queues?

**HOWARD:**

Well, from a social point of view, no. I mean, I'm particularly concerned about the level of youth unemployment. You're looking at particularly a hard core of about thirty thousand or more young people...

**OAKES:**

Can you do anything for them?

**HOWARD:**

... who've been out of work for six months. We have a number of measures in mind. One measure that we are actively looking at now is to introduce some kind of work for the dole system on a pilot basis. What I've got in mind is to pilot both voluntary and compulsory schemes in regional and rural areas of Australia where there are high levels of unemployment.

This approach is not designed to save money and it's not designed to manipulate the unemployment figures, and...

**OAKES:**

What would it do?

**HOWARD:**

Well, what it would do is provide people with work generated by local business and community groups in areas of high unemployment. Young people would be paid the award rate. They'd only be required to work the number of hours to equal the value of their dole, calculated at relevant award rates, so there's to be no question of people being exploited for...

**OAKES:**

This is not the three dollar an hour youth wage under another guise?

**HOWARD:**

No, no absolutely not. And I want to make that very, very clear that in most cases people would only be required to work, say, fifteen to twenty hours a week because applying the relevant award that would work out the value of the dole and importantly it's not designed to save money but it will give people work skills.

**OAKES:**

How many pilot programs do you have in mind?

**HOWARD:**

Well we could be running... we could have up to twenty or thirty pilot programs, perhaps even more.

**OAKES:**

Across the nation?

**HOWARD:**

Across the nation, yes. And we have been examining how this might work over the past few weeks, we've got more work to do on it, but during the election campaign I never at any stage ruled out the possibility of a work for the dole approach ...

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney: Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoyne NSW 2047  
Tel: 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 6388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 8777 or 273 8778 Fax 06 273 8888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehameam@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia

**OAKES:**

Although it was in Fightback mach one, and it was dumped just before the '93 election. Why has it been revived?

**HOWARD:**

Well it was ... well it's not a question of being revived. I mean, when I became leader of the Party I was very, very careful whenever I was asked about this never to rule it out. In fact, I think I may have said on a number of occasions I had no objection to the concept. But what I have ruled out and will continue to rule out, of course, is a three dollar an hour youth wage. It's got nothing to do with that.

**OAKES:**

What sort of work will they do? Are we talking about painting park benches?

**HOWARD:**

Well, well, yeah ... I mean, I don't know. You know, for example, one scheme that I know worked quite well was a scheme where a lot of young people were engaged in meeting and greeting newly arrived visitors to Sydney, and part of the work they were given ... or part of the package they were given and might be given under this arrangement ... would be a short training course at a TAFE college as part and parcel of the package that they would be offered.

Another scheme that I think would work very effectively would be to use volunteer community organisations to ... for young people to do work helping retired people in all sorts of different tasks.

What worries me is that people who are out of work for a long time, particularly when they're young, lose or never have acquired the habit to work and any of the sort of work ethic that I think is very important to the Australian community is simply not available to them and that sort of cycle of despondency and despair which can be so destructive of the sprit of younger people is there. Now, this is one way of tackling the problem and I don't see

**HOWARD CONT/D:**

it as in any way annihilating the thirty thousand long term and ... or the hundred thousand or more overall youth unemployed in the community.

What you've got to do when you have an intractable problem is to try a whole lot of things, and over a period of time each will make a little contribution.

**OAKES:**

Prime Minister, we'll have to take a break. Be back in a moment.

**HOWARD:**

Pleasure.

...[Commercial break]...

**OAKES:**

Welcome back. Prime Minister, Tim Fischer and others have criticised the High Court over the Wik judgement. Do you criticise it?

**HOWARD:**

I accepted the High Court has both the power and the authority to interpret the law of Australia. I also reserve the right as the head of the government of Australia to change the current law as interpreted. So, that's my response.

The Wik decision surprised me and the Wik decision has in one quite fundamental area turned the land law of Australia on its head. The idea originally was that if you had a lease it gave you more or less exclusive possession. And the Native Title Act was written on the assumption that the grant of the pastoral lease extinguish native title. I mean, that was in the recital, and it was given the same status in the preamble of the recital to the Act as a declaration of the old doctrine of terra nullius.

And no... you know, the land belonged to nobody at the time of European settlement. The same status as that, of course, which was the doctrine

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney: Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoyne NSW 2047  
Tel. 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 6388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 6777 or 273 6778 Fax 06 273 6888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehamem@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia

**HOWARD CONT/D:**

overturned by the High Court in the Mabo case. So Wik has given us an entirely new ball game. I think, in a sense, Wik retrospectively changed the laws so far as pastoralists were concerned. It's a very difficult issue this and ...

**OAKES:**

Are you conscious all the time as you think about this that the eyes of the world are on Australia and your Government? Is it that serious?

**HOWARD:**

I .... look, I think Australia has a very good record on human rights. I mean, if other countries were to start lecturing Australia my advice to the Australians is to turn and face the rest of the world and be very proud of what we have achieved in this country.

**OAKES:**

So your decision won't be affected by international perceptions?

**HOWARD:**

No, my decision will be overwhelmingly influenced by delivering the right outcome for the Australian people, and that includes all of us. See, Aborigines as much as the farmers and the miners and ...

**OAKES:**

You've now talked to all the ...[indistinct]... about all of this?

**HOWARD:**

I've talked to all of them and I hope to get ...

**OAKES:**

Are your ideas firmed up? Do you know now how radical the changes to the law will need to be?

**HOWARD:**

I haven't made up my mind what to do with it yet, and I'm having another meeting next Friday with representatives of the Aborigines, the farmers and the miners to see if we can reach some common ground.

**OAKES:**

Is extinguishment still a possibility ...

**HOWARD:**

I haven't ruled out anything except overturning the Mabo decision. I mean, definitely native title as such, the concept of native title must stay, and obviously it's not open to the Government to sit on its hands and do nothing.

**OAKES:**

There do seem to be divisions in the Government though. The Nationals are taking a much harder line than your Party, aren't they?

**HOWARD:**

No, I don't think there are any divisions. I can understand ... if you were the representative of a farmer and there are a lot of Liberal rural members feel the same way, and you've had an understanding of a hundred to two hundred years suddenly overturned and you think your title is less secure than it used to be, you'd be worried too. And that basically is the conundrum that we have, and it's going to be easy [sic] to solve it but I'm going to try hard to reach agreement. I really will try hard ...

**OAKES:**

What about the suggestion from the National Party president, Don McDonald, that it may even be necessary to raise taxes to pay any compensation?

**HOWARD:**

Well, I'm not too keen on raising taxes at all and ...

**OAKES:**

You rule it out?

**HOWARD:**

What, raising taxes?

**OAKES:**

For this purpose.

**HOWARD:**

Look I ... I'm ... look I'm... look I'm going to talk to everybody and see if we can reach a common ground, but the idea of increasing taxes for any purpose is monumentally unattractive to me.

**OAKES:**

The republic, which I think is also fairly unattractive to you ...

**HOWARD:**

Yes, I'm not Australia's leading republican, that's true but I ...

**OAKES:**

But you've set the wheels in motion that may lead to that.

**HOWARD:**

Well, I promised people that I would have a convention and we're having a convention and it'll be by the end of the year. They'll be half elected, half chosen. There'll be a voluntary vote, we'll do it by post. Doing it by post will save about fifteen to twenty million dollars and half, as I say, will be appointed by the government and everybody will have an opportunity to campaign ...

**OAKES:**

Before the convention do you plan to go to England to brief the Queen on ... on that?

**HOWARD:**

Well, my travel plans overseas may involve a visit to the United States and Europe in the middle of the year, and if that turns out to be the case I certainly would, as a matter of courtesy as my predecessor did, call on the Queen and discuss these matters with her although she would have been aware of our policy during the last election campaign but I've not had any communication directly with her since the election and that's the normal constitutional process. The Governor-General is the de facto head of state of Australia and as demonstrated very clearly in 1975 he exercises all the authority of the Crown under our constitution.

**OAKES:**

I imagine the campaign for election of delegates to this convention will be fairly hard fought. Will you be out there banging the drum, saying vote one monarchist?

**HOWARD:**

I think, I will reflect the, sort of, variety of views ... I'd be sensitive to the variety of views within my own party on this issue. I don't think I'll be taking a particularly partisan stance. But Laurie I've never dissembled on this issue. The Australian public knew that I was an anti-republican when they voted for as Prime Minister, and my party knew that. But I promise the Australian people this, if they want a republic they will have it and I will not stand in their way. I will never allow my personal view on this to interfere with the emergence of a consensus. But I just ask them not to change the present system until they are satisfied that the one they change it to is as good, if not better.

**OAKES:**

Now you mentioned your overseas travel plans. This year do they include a trip to China ...

**HOWARD:**

Yes.

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney, Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoyne NSW 2047  
Tel: 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 6388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 6777 or 273 6778 Fax 06 273 6888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehame@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia



**OAKES:**

... to try and heal tensions with China?

**HOWARD:**

Well, I'll be going to China during Easter. I'll be going to China and Singapore during Easter and I'll be seeing the President and the Premier Li Peng and the Foreign Minister and other senior people in the Chinese Government. It's an important visit. I want to have a pragmatic mutually respectful relationship with China. China's a different country from Australia, it's not a democracy, its human rights approaches are different from Australia's. But it's an important partner. China invests more in Australia than any foreign country

...

**OAKES:**

They've been very critical of your Government, haven't they?

**HOWARD:**

Yes, but not with a great deal of justification.

**OAKES:**

But is this a fence mending trip?

**HOWARD:**

It's a desire ... it's a demonstration on my part of a desire to have a good relationship. I think fence mending implies that the relationship is worse than what in reality it is. It's still quite a strong relationship but we've been willing to stand up for things we believe in in relation to China such as my seeing the Dalai Lama. But on the other hand we have a lot in common, and China invests a lot of money in Australia, there's a lot of Australian businessmen who are opening up opportunities in that country.

**OAKES:**

A few other quick issues I'd like to get to in the limited time. Did your Government cut back too hard on funds for legal aid?

**HOWARD:**

I don't believe so. The principle was that we fund areas of legal aid for the operation of Commonwealth law and the states ought to do it for state law.

**OAKES:**

So no chance that you'll revisit those cuts and perhaps ...

**HOWARD:**

Well, I don't ... I'm ... I certainly don't have any intention of doing that. The Attorney-General, like any other minister, can always approach the Cabinet on something like that, but there's no current intention to do so.

**OAKES:**

Now how much more pain can we expect in the May budget?

**HOWARD:**

Well, we have to tighten a bit more but it will be nothing like last year.

**OAKES:**

What about the L-A-W, LAW tax cuts money? Is that still going to be provided in some form?

**HOWARD:**

Well, I can't really ... I can't really do other than repeat what Peter Costello and I have said in relation to that over the last couple of weeks. Obviously we've got to take some decisions in the budget about that and we will announce that decision when the budget is brought down.

**OAKES:**

Now there's been speculation that the Government may have to revisit the industrial relations laws. Do you see that as a likelihood?

**HOWARD:**

I think any law like that should be kept under review and if there are changes in the future that are needed they'll be made but ...

**OAKES:**

Do you think they'll be needed?

**HOWARD:**

... but ... look, it's all together too early. I mean, the unfair dismissal law only went just over a month ago. I mean, a lot of small business men and women in Australia still think we've got the Brereton unfair dismissal law. It was only abolished on the first of January because it was only by then we could get the law through the Parliament. The workplace rela... the workplace agreements part of the law doesn't start 'til the first of March, so it's too early to talk about the operation of a law which has only just begun to operate.

**OAKES:**

Two more quick ones. Our cover story this morning is about Joe Gutnick financing the rebuilding of the Hebron settlement. Are you aware of a protest ... a formal protest from the PLO to your Government about this?

**HOWARD:**

No I'm not.

**OAKES:**

What do you think of the action?

**HOWARD:**

Well, I'd like to get some more information about it before I make any comment. I'm ...

**OAKES:**

Do you think Australia should be involved in that kind of thing?

**HOWARD:**

Well, I think Australia should try and play an honest broker role in relation to Israel and Palestine. We have a very close relationship with Israel and I'm very proud of my own, you know, personal association with Israel's cause over a very long period of time but I understand the ...[indistinct]...

**OAKES:**

So what about a private citizen being involved in that way?

**HOWARD:**

Well it depends upon the circumstances of it and, I mean, you can't just condemn it out of hand. I don't think one should.

**OAKES:**

Now you're renowned for your interest in cricket.

**HOWARD:**

I am.

**OAKES:**

We have a crisis on our hands, the South African tests at the moment are not going to be shown live on free-to-air television. Can you do anything about that?

**HOWARD:**

Well we are very concerned about that and it seems to undercut the spirit of the anti-syphoning laws, and I think the former government's anti-syphoning laws have good a loophole in them. But at the moment we're working very hard talking to the networks and talking to the ... to News who are the owners of the rights which were purchased from the South African Cricket Board. And I am hopeful ... cautiously hopeful, that we might be able to do something that will lead to a substantial part of the test series being broadcast live to air. Now ...

**OAKES:**

What about the one day series?

**HOWARD:**

Well, don't know about that. We're working very hard on the other one and I don't want to make any iron clad promises but I'm hopeful, on the basis of what I was told last night by the Communications Minister, Richard Alston, that there might be a breakthrough there. And I think all Australia cricket lovers would be delighted if we could see a situation where a substantial part of the test series at least were broadcast live to air.

**OAKES:**

You said there's a loophole in the law. Are you going to close it?

**HOWARD:**

Yes.

**OAKES:**

What will that involve?

**HOWARD:**

Well, some amending legislation. But my view is very simple, that major sporting events ... and test cricket is obviously a major sporting event ... Davis Cup, AFL, all of those things must be available for Australian's on a live to air basis. I mean, for a sports loving nation such as Australia there should be no mucking around on this. You get your test cricket live to air, you get rugby league live to air, you get tennis, you get golf, you get Australian Rules. I mean there's got to be certain things, Laurie, that must be preserved.

**OAKES:**

Prime Minister, we thank you.

**HOWARD:**

Pleasure.

**END OF SEGMENT**

Rehame Australia Monitoring Services Pty Ltd ACN 006 369 982  
Sydney: Suite 501 Henry Lawson Business Centre, Cary Street, Drummoyne NSW 2047  
Tel: 02 98196266 Fax 02 9819 8388 e-mail rehameph@rehame.com.au  
Canberra: 27 State Circle, Deakin, ACT 2600 - Opposite Ministerial Entrance, Parliament House  
Tel 06 273 6777 or 273 8778 Fax 06 273 6888 e-mail rehamega@netinfo.com.au  
Melbourne: Tel 03 646 6966 Fax 03 646 6288 e-mail rehame@rehame.com.au  
57, Rouse Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207, Australia