

3a

5 May 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

**THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP**

**AND THE CHANCELLOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, HIS EXCELLENCY DR HELMUT KOHL**

**JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA**

E&OE.....

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start this press conference by reporting that this morning the Chancellor and I, who had our first ever meeting, spent one and a half hours in a very wide ranging beneficial discussion about bilateral issues and also world political and economic issues.

I welcome the Chancellor to Australia as the longest serving leader in the democratic world. The leadership that he has given to Germany and to Europe has been quite outstanding and the insights that he provided in relation to European political and economic issues were extremely valuable.

And I especially welcome the warmth of the personal exchanges between the two of us and we both identified the very deep cultural, historical and personal links that exist between Australia and Germany. It is not only an economic association but it is also a very strong people to people association.

The Chancellor's views on European unity were strong, robust and very direct.

In conclusion I emphasise to the Chancellor that despite the very strong affinity between Australia and the Asia-Pacific region and the enormous stress that Australia places on our links with that part of the world, the bulk of our direct investment goes into the European Union and that there is absolutely nothing incompatible between our association with the Asia-Pacific region and deep and growing economic and other ties with the nations of Europe and not the least the Federal Republic.

**KOHL:**

Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen. I want to use this opportunity here to thank you. I'm also here in front of the public. Thank you for the very warm and gracious hospitality with which you received myself and the members of my delegation here to Australia.

This is my first visit as Chancellor of the re-unified Germany to your country. At this point in time I would like to thank you and the people of Australia for the ongoing and continuous support and sympathy that you have shown towards our country in the process leading up to unification.

I said just now I was here on my first visit as Chancellor of the re-unified Germany and I think that this demonstrates our very clearly the sort of tremendous changes that we have seen in only a comparatively short period of time. And in many ways this was the basic sentiment underlying the talks that we had here this morning, the Prime Minister and I, talks indeed they were characterised by a spirit of partnership indeed a friendship, and obviously I think now we should draw conclusions from these events.

You have just said Prime Minister that we have seen tremendous changes occurring also here in the Asian-Pacific region just as we have known such dramatic changes over in Europe. Now obviously, geographically speaking, there is a great distance with regards to kilometres between our two countries, but that doesn't really amount to all that much if we look at the global developments in the world at large. And therefore I think we were at one, Prime Minister, in saying that we would like this visit of mine here to Australia to inject more quality into the relationship between our two countries. This goes for the political, the economic relationship and last but not least obviously for cultural relations and just now we have witnessed the initialling of an agreement in this particular sphere.

We would like to see obviously as many investments as possible taken out by Australian companies in Germany and in particularly in the former East Germany and obviously we would also like to see the reverse happening - investments taken by German companies here in Australia.

And I am using this opportunity really here to also address the public in Australia. I think it is important to see what is currently happening in Germany and to seize this opportunity that is opening up.

And I'm referring here not only to what is happening in Germany but what is happening in Europe and no matter what you may be reading or hearing these days you may rest assured that we are making progress in building the European house.

In six weeks time we shall have another very important conference in Amsterdam where we will be completing the Maastricht treaty. And at April of next year we shall take the important decisions on who will be participating in the first group of those who will be members of the existing currency union.

So Euro will come, will be brought about no matter what you may be reading and with the timeframe that we have agreed upon. Now obviously I would never dare to give any sort of advice to Australians but if I were an Australian I would say irrespective of all of the undoubted developments that we see and have seen recently in the Asia-Pacific area, Europe is back again on the stage. Europe is not sort of gone, it is back again. And it is my wish that this relationship between the Europe of the European Union and this region here, Asian-Pacific and Australia and the relationship bilaterally between Australia and Germany be a very close one, and there are direct links between aeroplanes, between you and us. There need not be a stopover or a change of planes in London - you can obviously make a stopover in London if you like. There are excellent communication links that I believe are binding our two countries together.

On a more serious note now after what I have seen this morning, no matter what you may be thinking and hearing about economic times, about the introduction of the Euro and other matters perhaps I should share a few of the thoughts with you that I felt this morning when visiting the war memorial, and when you then stand there facing the Australian galleries holding the names on the panels of those who were killed in both the first and the second world war. And at this point in time you remember with sadness but also with admiration and respect those people who gave their lives during those two wars. And please bear in mind also that it is the purpose of setting up the European Union to avoid that this occurs again, that Australians have to go again and fight in a European war.

And to remember that irrespective of all of the ties in the economic and social and cultural field, all of these different areas that are obviously of very great importance, that irrespective of that, the most important part of the driving force for the unification of the European Union is that the 21st Century that will start after only 3 years will be one that will be a period, a century of peace and of freedom in Europe.

Thank you Prime Minister and thank you also Prime Minister for accepting the invitation that I

conveyed to you to come to Germany, an invitation I convey to you on behalf of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and I will say that I am looking very much forward on seeing you soon in our country.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you. Questions - Mr Skehan.

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Howard, did you put to Dr Kohl Australia's view that the next meeting, that the climate change meeting in Kyoto, should allow for differentiation of greenhouse emission targets? Did you have any more success in putting those arguments to him than you did with Mr Hashimoto last week, and what will Australia's reaction be if unacceptable targets to your Government are imposed? Also, could Dr Kohl comment on his view of Australia's position on greenhouse emissions?

**KOHL:**

On this question there is a problem and one that is rising out of the natural differences that exist between our situation and Germany and in Europe, a new situation over here in Australia. But on the other hand one has to bear in mind that we, both of us, have declared ourselves committed to the overriding goal of preserving creation. And in the European Union, there are quite distinct nuances in how this particular issue is viewed in the individual member countries. And right now we are trying to find a balanced kind of an approach to this and we believe the same holds true in our relationship with Australia. And I told the Prime Minister that I will see to it at home in Germany and in the European Union that we have to be careful and I myself will personally get involved in avoiding that and preventing that, that Australia should not be placed in a position where it is, so to speak, in the dock on this particular issue. And I do think that we stand a very good chance of coming to a sensible kind of solution.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, I certainly did raise the issue as is implicit in the Chancellor's response. I made claim that Australia is in a unique position in the sense that Australia simultaneously is a developed country and a net exporter of energy. Following our discussion today I'll be sending a further detailed personal communication to the Chancellor going into further aspects of the concerns we have and pointing out how unless differentiation is allowed for Australia we will be very seriously disadvantaged by what we perceive to be the possible outcome of the attitude of both the United States and the European Union.

Questions from the German press.

**KOHL:**

You see Prime Minister, they always seem to be absolutely happy and have no other wish in life than to just sit there. That must be due to your personal charm, not due to mine.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It doesn't work like that here.

**JOURNALIST:**

I can assure that this is the single opinion of the Chancellor. Have you given the Chancellor any

assurances that you will or your country will participate at the Expo 2000?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

The Chancellor did raise that with me. We will consider what the Chancellor put to us. There are some considerations moving in both directions. I can say this, that we'll give very conscientious consideration to what he put, but I can't at this stage predict what the response will be.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Australian press. Mr Greenlees.

**JOURNALIST:**

A question to Chancellor Kohl - would you like to see Australia sitting across from Germany at the next Asia-Europe Summit in London next year? I understand that it is a matter for each side to decide on membership, but nonetheless, do you think Australia should get that summit? And a separate question to Mr Howard - if Australia does not win its position on differentiation are we prepared to walk away from the climate change convention?

**KOHL:**

On that first question, that obviously is a decision that has to be taken here. But let me just assure you, I would be very, very much in agreement and I would be very pleased indeed if my colleague were to sit opposite me at this meeting. I think it could only serve our purpose, the one that we are all striving for to achieve.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

As to the second question, I hope to persuade the other parties of the fairness, the commonsense and the practical advantage of differentiation. In those circumstances I'm not going to speculate as to what Australia might do if those approaches are unsuccessful. I should however emphasise again that this is very much a question of vital Australian national interests being at stake.

**JOURNALIST:**

Prime Minister, have you made already up your mind which high speed railway system should connect Sydney and Canberra?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, but I did talk about that to the Chancellor. And that particular project, and indeed the other projects, rail projects, potentially available in Australia, were the subjects of some discussion between the two of us. I would welcome if the Very Fast Train project does go beyond the current stage and I certainly hope it does, and indeed other projects of that kind in Australia. I would welcome the enthusiastic competition of German companies with their admirable technology in this area. I hope there's an opportunity for them to compete and if they're the best, I hope they win.

Thank you.

---