



8 May 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP BEFORE ADDRESS TO ASIA SOCIETY - SYDNEY**

E&OE.....

**JOURNALIST:**

...Inaudible...

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I don't comment on the direction of interest rates, never.

**JOURNALIST:**

Are you happy to see the recovery in the employment....

**PRIME MINISTER:**

The employment figures are good, they are very strong. Based on those figures we have created about 122 000 jobs since being elected in March of last year. So based on the month, they are very nice, they are very strong figures and they show a very pleasing rise in employment, particularly for women.

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Howard how concerned are you that the National Party can....

**PRIME MINISTER:**

They can't, it's the Government's plan.

**JOURNALIST:**

...inaudible...

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, it can't be defeated if the Government endorses it and the Government has endorsed it and I'm sure it will be supported in the partyroom. Can I just make it very clear that I have no intention of backing off this ten point plan. The fact that it is being attacked from all sides proves how fair it is. You always know when you've got it right when all of the people involved have a bit of a grizzle. What's happened on this occasion is that I've struck a fair balance between the need to respect native title and also the need to give certainty and security to the farmers and pastoralists of Australia.

**JOURNALIST:**

Does your plan allow for extinguishment as some members of the National Party are claiming?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

My plan has always allowed for extinguishment of native title in circumstances where the High Court says it is extinguished.

**JOURNALIST:**

What about pastoral leases though?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Pastoral leases under my plan do not extinguish native title unless those pastoral leases confer exclusive possession and that is what the law has always been and that is what the law was as declared by the High Court.. But could I just make it very clear, the change that was made to the wording of the plan did not add anything at all. All it did was to make exclusive what was already implicit. And any suggestion by...any suggestion by anybody that in some way there was a huge change made, or indeed any change, is nonsense. I think what you have at the moment is that some people are playing word games in order to explain away their behaviour and explain away their conduct. But I haven't given any grounds in relation to the 10 Point Plan. But I do want to make it clear that I don't need to because it gives the pastoralists all the security and all the protection and all the guarantees that they reasonably need and reasonably require.

**JOURNALIST:**

So when the National Party says that you've made major changes, they're wrong?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Absolutely wrong. I don't hear Mr Fischer saying that and as far as I'm concerned Mr Fischer is the National Party. I should make it clear that we listen to our party

organisations but the Liberal and National parties at the end of the day the parliamentary parties decide what has happened...what happens. And Tim Fischer and I are completely in agreement on this.

**JOURNALIST:**

But isn't Mr Fischer (inaudible) position? One day he says that he rejects the 10 Point Plan, the next minute he's forced to endorse it as a member of Cabinet.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I think Tim Fischer has tried to put a point of view on behalf of his party and many of the points that have been put on behalf of his party have always been part and parcel of our intentions. The only major difference is on the question of blanket extinguishment and I have said all along that is not part of our plan. It never has been part of our plan. It is not part of our plan. It would cost the Australian taxpayer enormous amounts of money. It would produce constitutional challenges. It would tie individual properties up in the courts for years and they are some of the reasons why they haven't been included. But our plan will protect the rights of pastoralists. It has not been altered. It won't be altered. And it remains the embodiment of the best and fairest way of handling this, admittedly, very difficult issue.

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