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**PRIME MINISTER**

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**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP  
RADIO INTERVIEW, ALAN JONES PROGRAMME  
RADIO 2UE**

E&OE.....

**JONES:**

Good morning. Prime Minister, just because you may not have heard what I just said.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No I didn't.

**JONES:**

If I could just re-canvass. Earlier this year a television station ran a story that, when Mr Keating was Federal Treasurer, he moved his family to Canberra but continued to claim Sydney as his principle place of residence. And that television station earlier this year - in April - said that a source within the Australian Federal Police had argued that an investigating team in 1989 had prepared a brief to go to the Director of Public Prosecutions over the claims. The argument is that that was stopped by the then Justice Minister, Michael Tate.

In the light of everything that has happened, is it not time to put all ministerial allowances over the past ten years on the table so that the people know, the public know, the taxpayers know, that the standards that you have asked of John Sharp will be applied to everybody?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well certainly, can I make it clear that the standards that I have imposed on this occasion will be imposed in the future while ever I am Prime Minister. I don't allege any dishonesty on Mr Sharp's part and I am very sorry to have lost him because he was a very competent Minister. But for the reasons I outlined, he had no alternative but to resign and I am having all of the circumstances looked at by the Auditor-General.

As to what might be done in relation to past travel claims, look I just take that on notice. I am not going to respond to ....

**JONES:**

Well let me ask you another one....

**PRIME MINISTER:**

...now hang on, I am not... Look the worse thing to do in these situations is for somebody in my position just to respond on the run to this suggestion. I note what you say. It's not something that I have turned my mind to. People might well say - you know - there has got to be an end point. I am not involved in fishing expeditions. I am not trying to trawl through other people's business. I deal with things that come to me within my province of responsibility as Prime Minister and that is why I acted as I did yesterday. I am very sorry to have lost an extremely competent Transport Minister.

It is regrettable personally for both of the men, but I had no alternative. And the Australian public should understand, that under my Prime Ministership, not only the reality of high standards, but also the appearance of high standards, is going to be maintained.

The taxpayers are entitled to know that when it comes to the use of their money that rigorous rules are applied and they can be assured that under my Prime Ministership that will apply, no matter who the people are, no matter what party they belong to, and no matter what their circumstances are.

**JONES:**

Alright. Now, you will though be, as the Prime Minister - because it's the nature of politics - you will be under siege from the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because they are the agents of the Opposition. Fourteen years ago, in exactly the same situation, when Senator Colston was found to have overclaimed, his repayment was in fact dealt with internally, aided and abetted by an administrative solution. So is the Parliament in the position to point the bone at Sharp and Jull?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, certainly the Labor Party is not, given the direct involvement of Mr Beazley and Mr Evans in that cover up thirteen or fourteen years ago. They are not in a position to point the bone at Mr Sharp and Mr Jull. That doesn't alter the circumstances covering them and it doesn't in any way, reduce - not for a moment - the requirement on me to do what I did yesterday. But it is the case that thirteen or fourteen years ago, they were given legal advice, to send that man off to the Federal Police for investigation and they deliberately overruled it.

Now, there was no suggestion on this occasion that any people be sent to the Federal Police. I haven't overruled any advice. In fact I acted as soon as I was satisfied that, what should have been done in May of this year was not done, and to preserve not only the reality but also the perception of standards, I acted as I did.

But, can I just say that, given that particular incident, the Labor Party is in no situation to read me lectures on ethics or standards or probity. I have insisted, at the cost of, in the case of Mr Sharp, a person of immense ability and somebody who is highly regarded by people in the transport industry for the job that he's done. But I have done it because the reputation of the Government and the obligation I owe to the Australian people, not only in reality, to look out for their money, but appear to be looking after their money, is more important than the ministerial career of any individual in my Government.

**JONES:**

Is there then Prime Minister a case to be made now for dramatic administrative change whereby, perhaps, we should increase Parliamentary salaries, provide Parliamentarians with an allowance - albeit of a fairly frugal nature - and then let them spend that as they see fit. Now for example, I ask you that because one of Mr Sharp's Party colleagues, Peter McGauran, who is also one of your Ministers, you have obviously accepted his explanation but...

**PRIME MINISTER:**

...He has not broken the rules in any way.

**JONES:**

Accept that he has lifted..

**PRIME MINISTER:**

He has made a voluntary repayment of almost \$8,000 or \$9,000. He didn't have to pay the money back. He did.

**JONES:**

Except that when you say, 108 nights in Melbourne, at your own family's apartment and still claim \$300. That is technically correct, he is allowed to do that. So under the rules that is fine. In though the spirit of what the TA is all about, doesn't this also highlight that we need to revise the way in which it operates and functions.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well Alan, I haven't got in mind, at the moment, some major revisions, I have had other things on my mind in the last 24 hour. Obviously, when things like this happen, your mind, in time, wanders to whether other sorts of changes need to be made.

Can I say again in defence of my colleagues, and I don't just mean my Liberal Party colleagues but also my Labor Party colleagues. The overwhelming bulk of Member of Parliament, despite what the public says on occasion, work very hard and are very honest men and women.

Now I don't suggest for a moment that John Sharp is not amongst that very hard working and honest group, or David Jull. I have always found in my dealings with both men that they have been honest.

They weren't out of the Ministry, because of my belief that they had been dishonest. They were out of the Ministry because, given the magnitude of the repayment and the circumstances, it should of been disclosed and a proper explanation sought for the original error. Now that is the reason they they are out.

**JONES:**

And you've turned it over to the Auditor General?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Now I have turned it over to the Auditor-General. Now I can't be more transparent and open and adopting the approach of letting the cards fall where they may. I want yesterday, obviously, like the proverbial hole in the head. But it's happened it's been dealt with and now I am back to the business of dealing with unemployment, dealing with tax reform, continuing the process of waterfront reform.

**JONES:**

That's a big problem isn't it? Filling the Sharp hole?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I want to make it very clear that John Sharp's departure, in no way, will lessen the determination of my Government to see waterfront reform. We have changed the law to break the legal monopoly of the Maritime Union of Australia on the recruitment of

waterfront labour. Conditions now exist for a different approach by companies and I want the Australian people to understand that I am focussing on the things of concern to them. I am not interested in other distractions but dealing with employment, taxation, native title, waterfront reform, they're my priorities at the moment.

**JONES:**

Just a quick one on that. When will you then be announcing replacements and will you be making major changes to your Ministry or just replacing these two people? And can you tell us when?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I am not going to speculate on the nature of any changes and whatever changes are made and obviously I have got to appoint two Ministers to replace the ones that have resigned. It will be soon but I am not going to commit myself to a day or an hour of a day.

**JONES:**

We are at a grand final breakfast here and I must just ask you - I believe that you saluted some of the great servants last night, at a dinner, at the Lodge?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It was a very pleasant occasion. I had John Quayle and Ken Arthurson and a mixture of Rugby League followers from both sides of politics. From my side, there was myself and John Fahey and Bronwyn Bishop and others. From the Labor Party side there was John Faulkner, Steve Martin and Arch Bevis from Queensland and Michael Foreshaw, and we had Arko and Qualye.

**JONES:**

Any argument?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, it was a very civil...only over which team was going to win.

**JONES:**

Who was going to win?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Strangely enough Ken Arthurson was saying Manly.

**JONES:**

And John Howard?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

John Howard, can I say, I've got a split ticket. My head is with Manly but given their rise, my heart is with Newcastle.

**JONES:**

Thank you for your time.

[Ends]