



## PRIME MINISTER

21 October 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP  
DOORSTOP  
RAAF BASE, FAIRBAIRN, CANBERRA**

E&OE.....

**JOURNALIST:**

Are you under pressure to review your nursing home legislation now that the backbenchers are unhappy with it

**PRIME MINISTER:**

We had quite a long discussion this morning and everybody, to my recollection, expressed support for the policy. There were some requests for fine-tuning. There was also a request that more information be made available. And I said that we'd take both of those requests on board. But what was interesting in the discussion was that although people did stress those two points, everybody that contributed, to my recollection, expressed support for the policy.

**JOURNALIST:**

[Inaudible]

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I can only repeat what I said.

**JOURNALIST:**

Are you concerned about the Government's fall in popularity?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, I think what I said at the weekend in relation to Mrs Kernot remains the case.

**JOURNALIST:**

Are you expecting an attack over greenhouse this week?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

From whom?

**JOURNALIST:**

From the small island nations at CHOGM.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Their views are known. Our position on greenhouse gas emissions is that we are prepared to pull our weight, play our part, make a fair contribution. But I'm not going to agree to something that unfairly punishes Australia and it seems that that is what the Europeans want. I will resist that and I will resist it at Kyoto, or my Minister will, but we will be making our contribution and pulling our weight. But I am not prepared to sacrifice Australian jobs, Australian growth and Australian economic progress.

**JOURNALIST:**

How seriously are you taking the threats of a boycott to the Olympics?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Not at all. I don't take those threats the least bit seriously. The native title issue is something that should be resolved in Australia by Australians. Australians are never impressed when people go overseas and dump on their country, never ever. It's always the wrong way to get your message across. And it's obvious from what Michael Mansell, for example, has said that the whole purpose of his and his mates exercise is to embarrass the Government. He's not interested in Australia and he's not interested in a fair resolution of this issue. He's merely interested in embarrassing me politically. I've been dealing with experts trying to do that for years and I'm hardly likely to be moved by his little exercise.

**JOURNALIST:**

What are you hoping to get out of your talks with Tony Blair?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, perhaps the normal exchanges that occur between an Australian and a British Prime Minister. We have a lot in common. I understand that in relation to one of the outstanding bilateral matters, and that is the indexation of pensions paid to former United Kingdom citizens in Australia, that as a result of an initiative of mine in our talks a few months ago, agreement has now been reached between the two governments on the basic figures and the basic costs that might be involved. It is now,

of course, a matter for the British Government to do the right thing. We will continue to pressure the British to do it as our predecessors pressed them to do it because we think it's only fair that former UK citizens have their pensions indexed.

**JOURNALIST:**

Do you think he'll raise greenhouse?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Beg your pardon?

**JOURNALIST:**

Do you think he'll raise greenhouse?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It might come up, but he understands our position. I mean, I'm looking after the Australian national interest and what the Europeans, including the British, are asking is unfair to Australia and that's why I won't accept it.

**JOURNALIST:**

Mr Howard, is the Government trying to water down the independence of the Clerks of each House of Parliament?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, in fact, I'm a very strong supporter of the role and the status of the Clerks of the Parliament to be able to give independent advice to all members of Parliament irrespective of their political stripe. And any suggestion that we are trying to interfere with the independent role of the Clerks within the parameters of their normal responsibilities is completely wrong.

**JOURNALIST:**

The Opposition says you want to reduce their tenure to five years.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Oh well, what else do you expect the Opposition to say?

[Ends]