

27 October 1997

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
RADIO INTERVIEW WITH MATT PEACOCK
AM PROGRAMME, ABC RADIO**

E&OE.....

JOURNALIST:

Finally John Howard is having fun and he could scarcely contain his good humour as he strolled over the world's oldest golf course with his wife Janette at the CHOGM retreat in the picturesque St. Andrews. It is here that the leaders came by train in their luxury Pullman coaches to fraternise, play tennis and finalise their position on Nigeria, who remains suspended but not expelled from the Commonwealth for another year. They could even attend a pre-lunch presentation by the Scotch Malt Whisky Society with practical as well as theoretical application on how to enjoy a really good malt. So did Mr Howard taste or sniff.

PRIME MINISTER:

The Prime Minister should never confess to sniffing anything. You know, I look but I don't sniff.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Howard has every reason to be pleased, he has just been chatting with Nelson Mandela, the unrivalled celebrity at this conference who has risked the wrath of the United States and Britain by urging a trial outside Scotland for the Libyan Lockerby bombing suspects. The South African President even offered to mediate on native title between Aboriginal Australian and the Federal Government, an offer that was quickly rejected. But Mr Howard says he has accepted an invitation to visit South Africa. It is on greenhouse, though, that Australian diplomacy has been victorious with its efforts over the past few days reversing a strong push by Europe and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to set specific gas emission reduction targets for Kyoto. The final text was not specific at all, Mr Howard smugly observed. But even better for the Government it includes those magic words, "differentiated responsibilities" and a commitment for all countries to pull their weight. This is just what Australia wanted and came about with the help of Canada and interestingly, developing countries like India.

PRIME MINISTER:

And you have now got a position where the Europeans are saying this, the Japanese are saying this and the Americans are saying this and we are saying something else. I think what you have got is a situation where if the goal of action is to be achieved then you have to allow for differences in opinion between different countries.

JOURNALIST:

And how supportive will the fact that CHOGM is now mentioning differentiation be in Kyoto?

PRIME MINISTER:

Very good Matt. Because what it does is represents an expression of view of a whole variety countries, big countries, industrialised countries, developing countries with big populations.

JOURNALIST:

Like India?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes. Very small countries with small populations. So it is encouraging. I don't want to overstate it, I never do in these things. But certainly all the talk about stand offs and this and that haven't materialised.

JOURNALIST:

Do you think that the fact that the Europeans, the Germans, for example, have been so hostile to President Clinton's announcement of last week may have the effect of helping Australia's cause too?

PRIME MINISTER:

It wasn't very clever of them being so hostile to the Americans.

JOURNALIST:

What about President Mandela, did you discuss the Wik offer that he made any further?

PRIME MINISTER:

No that didn't come up.

JOURNALIST:

Mrs Howard, how are you finding the trip so far?

MRS HOWARD

It has been very interesting, it really has. I think the most important thing has been to meet the other leaders and to develop a personal relationship with some of them. And it doesn't really quite matter where you are when you are doing that. Except it is very nice to be in Edinburgh. I hadn't been here before and it is very interesting.

JOURNALIST:

And what have you both been doing today?

PRIME MINISTER:

What do you mean?

JOURNALIST:

No more resigning Ministers on this trip, the name Cheryl Kernot hasn't even been mentioned, although the Prime Minister has finally conceded that his policy on aged care homes will need some changes, but he says only small ones.

PRIME MINISTER

It will be fine tuning but the principles of the policy are going to remain because the principle is very sound. And that is that where people can afford to make a contribution to their own care they should be asked to do so. That is part of the principle of mutual obligation. We are not asking people who can't afford to do so to contribute to their care, we will look after them. We will provide a helping hand to people who don't have the resources to care for themselves in their old age. But people who do have the resources, there is nothing wrong, and I don't for a moment retreat from saying that if you can afford to make a contribution to your care it is only reasonable that you do so and not ask the general body of taxpayers to pick up the bill. Now there is nothing wrong or un-Australian or unfair about that, it is a perfectly sound principle.

JOURNALIST:

Tomorrow the CHOGM conference winds up and the Prime Minister heads for Indonesia where he will be discussing trade, the currency crisis and, of course greenhouse with President Soeharto.

[Ends]