



PRIME MINISTER

9 November 2013

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP
ADDRESS TO THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
LIBERAL PARTY STATE COUNCIL,
PERTH**

E&OE.....

It is a tremendous honour to be here. It really is a tremendous honour to be here.

I am so thrilled to be amongst my friends and Liberal colleagues of Western Australia. I am delighted to bask in the reflected glory of a great Premier, Colin Barnett, and though, sadly, I am not myself a Western Australian, yes, the greatest honour I can have is to be the Prime Minister of Western Australia.

The first thing I want to do today, my friends, is to thank the Liberals of Western Australia for everything you have done for me, for my parliamentary colleagues, and for our country because we would not be in government but for the support and the strength of this great division of our great party.

I thank you, President Geoff Prosser, a former parliamentary colleague and a friend of many years standing.

I thank you, State Director Ben Morton, who has done an outstanding job. State Directors are the first people to be blamed when things go wrong. They're the last people to be thanked when things go right and the least I can do, Ben, is thank you for the good work that you have done for your state and for our country.

Like many West Australians, you weren't born here and like many West Australians you are, as it were, a citizen of the world. So we know not where you may end up but wherever it is, wherever it is the great work that you have done here in this state will always be remembered.

I thank my friend, my colleague, my partner, Julie Bishop, who has done an extraordinary job as the Deputy Leader of our party. Julie has for a long time been the senior federal West Australian Liberal. She has been a magnificent ambassador for this state and now she is doing an extraordinary job for our country.

All of my colleagues have made a good transition from Opposition to Government. I think all of my colleagues have understood the difference between Opposition and Government. All of my colleagues have appreciated the difference between Opposition, which is mostly theatre, and Government, which is all substance, but none have made the transition as smoothly and as surely and with more exhilaration and purpose than Julie Bishop and well done Julie for the extraordinary job you've done.

But I want to thank all of my West Australian colleagues. Obviously my Cabinet colleagues: David Johnston, the Defence Minister, Mathias Cormann, the Finance Minister, Ministers Michaelia Cash and Michael Keenan. I thank all of my Western Australian colleagues for the job they've done.

I want to particularly acknowledge my new parliamentary colleagues from Western Australia: Melissa Price, the new Member for Durack, Rick Wilson, the new Member for O'Connor, Ian Goodenough who has replaced the outstanding Mal Washer and of course Christian Porter who has replaced Judi Moylan and it takes a lot of guts to surrender a ministry, a senior ministry in the State Parliament to go into the Federal Parliament and Christian Porter is someone who has put the Australian back into Western Australia and I really congratulate him and thank him.

I congratulate Linda Reynolds, Senator Elect Linda Reynolds and whatever happens, Linda, whatever the High Court might determine in the weeks and months to come, we are determined that you will be a Senator for this party and this state in Canberra.

But you know, every election is a bittersweet occasion. There are winners and sadly there are losers and even in this great state of Western Australia, even in the ranks of Liberals from this great state of Western Australia, even amidst the triumph of getting close to 50 per cent of the primary vote, there are some of us who just fell short. I congratulate everyone who ran for our party but did not succeed in being elected.

I want to particularly congratulate and thank Donna Gordi, for the work she did. No one could have worked harder and more tirelessly to represent the seat of Brand than Donna Gordin. I calculated that I went into that seat on eight occasions over the last term of Parliament and I was thinking to myself, if only I'd only gone four times maybe Donna would have got up. But Donna, look, you did do an extraordinary job and we are extremely grateful.

But friends, I don't just want to thank the Liberals of Western Australia for your contribution to our Government and to our country. I want to thank the people of Western Australia more generally for everything this state does for our country. It might be two or three hours away across the Nullarbor Plain from our principle population centres, but the wealth, the strength and the dynamism of our country critically depends upon this state, Western Australia. You've got just 10 per cent of our people but you produce some 16 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product and you give us almost 50 per cent of our exports. On behalf of the people of Australia, I say thank you to the people of Western Australia for the extraordinary contribution you make to our national strength and our national unity.

Whenever I come to this great city in this beautiful state and I see the extraordinary things that are happening, when I sense the palpable dynamism of the West Australian people, the extraordinary can-do optimism of the people of this state and this city and I think, wouldn't it be good if this was more general across our country? And I think the people of Australia want to resemble more closely the people of Western Australia. I believe that one of the reasons why there was a change of government was because the people of Australia want to say yes to jobs, yes to development, yes to prosperity and yes to having a go and they know that none of that was happening under the former government.

The former government left us a terrible mess. It left us a terrible mess but I want to say to you, my fellow Liberals of Western Australia, and to the people of Western Australia, that we have made a good start, that the adults are back in charge and that strong, stable, methodical and purposeful government is once more the rule in our national capital.

Yes, over the course of the former government, unemployment went up by some 200,000. Yes, under the former government, our gross commonwealth debt was skyrocketing past \$400 billion and, most shamefully of all, under the former government we had more than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat as the former government totally lost control of our borders. We even had the extraordinary situation of an illegal boat turning up in the middle of Geraldton Harbour one sunny weekday.

But things are changing and they are changing for the better. I think all of you have noticed there is a new tone and a new style in Canberra. I think all of you have noticed that there is now in government and in the ministries people who know that it's more important to make the right decisions than it is to make the big announcements that so often turn out to mean not what they seemed. It's more important to be bending the public servants to the policies and directions of the new government than it is to be out there trying to manipulate the media. It's more important to be involved in governing our country than it is simply to be giving endless interviews which are all about glorifying politicians rather than about doing the right thing by the people of Australia.

Yes, we will speak when we need to speak. We will act when we need to act. But we won't speak for the sake of speaking and we won't bung on things just for the purposes of a PR gesture because that's not good government. That's a form of political exhibitionism and we saw far too much of that over the last six years and the time for that has long passed.

So ladies and gentlemen, we are calmly, purposefully, methodically getting on with doing exactly what we said we would do in the campaign. We said we would abolish the carbon tax and the mining tax and legislation to do just that would be introduced into the Parliament this week. We said we would get the Budget back under control and individual ministers and portfolios are doing just that and the Commission of Audit, this once in a generation chance to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government is now doing its work.

We said we would build the infrastructure of the 21st Century and preparations are surging forward to ensure that the Swan Valley Bypass is built and the Perth Gateway gets cracking. We will do the right thing by the people of our great cities and our important, booming regions and we will give them the economic muscle and sinew that they need.

We said that we'd stop the boats and while they have not yet stopped, they are slowing and they are stopping and we will have setbacks and we will have disappointments but we will succeed because the test of a sovereign country and a sovereign government is its ability to control its borders and we will never again tolerate a situation where an important part of our immigration programme has been subcontracted out to people smugglers.

This is an issue of sovereignty for us and that's very important. When I was up in Jakarta a few weeks ago I was able to tell President Yudhoyono, a very good friend of our country, an outstanding President of Indonesia, I was able to tell him that we utterly, totally, completely respected Indonesian sovereignty and if any boat ever set out from Australia to Indonesia to enter that country illegally we would do our damndest to stop it. We would do our damndest to stop it and I think he understood that our sovereignty is just as important to us as their sovereignty is to them. We have good relations with Indonesia, good and improving relations with Indonesia but we will stop these boats. We will stop these boats. In any test of will between the Australian Government and the people smugglers, we will and we must prevail.

But friends, I said that my first trip as Prime Minister would be to Jakarta, and it was, and our foreign policy now has a Jakarta, not a Geneva focus, as it should. I said that we would lower the tax burden, and there are some 92 announced but un-enacted tax increases which the former government had in store for us and as Joe Hockey announced during this week, very few of them will proceed.

I said we would lower the regulatory burden and future Cabinet submissions that for good and necessary reasons, do increase regulation, will be required to absolutely quantify the cost of that regulation to the people who will be exposed to them and will be required to identify offsetting savings in the regulatory burden so that we can deliver \$1 billion in red tape savings to the people and the businesses of Australia every single year.

We said we would reduce the size of government and I was able to announce yesterday some 20 unnecessary committees and non-statutory bodies that would be abolished as a down payment on this commitment.

I said we would revitalise our free trade negotiations and that's exactly what we have done.

But we haven't just made strong decisions over the last few weeks, we have restored due process to the governmental system in Canberra. The ten day rule applies for Cabinet decisions. Cabinet submissions have to go into the Cabinet Secretariat ten days before they are discussed. Now, you might think that's just a paper work rule but if you don't get these things right, you don't get the decisions right because if people don't have time to reflect on the submission, to reflect on the decision, if the various experts don't have time to chew over all the consequences of these proposed decisions, invariably you end up getting important details wrong.

If you want to get the decisions right, you've got to get the process right and we are determined to ensure that Cabinet government in the Westminster tradition once more operates in Canberra. Cabinet government and the Westminster tradition has stood us in good stead for 112 years and I believe that it will stand us in good stead for the future and certainly that is what will always be maintained under my prime ministership.

Friends, this week the Parliament is coming back. The new Parliament is assembling and I am confident that after just a few weeks of the new parliament, that parliament that diminished our polity and embarrassed our citizens over the last three years will soon seem like just a bad memory. It will soon seem like just a bad memory. Rob Oakeshott, who's he? Tony Windsor, he was part of our system once but not anymore.

It will be a respectful Parliament. It will be a Parliament which discusses the issues rather than abuses individuals. It will be a Parliament of passion, of course. It will be a Parliament where the big issues are debated with conviction. But it will be a Parliament that respects the fact that just about every single member of that Parliament, all sides of the political fence, is there for the right reason. We will not impugn the motives of our political opponents. We will not trash the reputations of Members of Parliament and if any of us are tempted to go a little bit over the top, we'll have the most formidable parliamentarian of her era, Bronwyn Bishop, sitting in the Chair to keep us honest and fair and if there's one person in the Parliament who can speak without fear or favour it's Bronwyn Bishop. I see her colleagues past and present nodding in the front row.

But it will be a Parliament, friends, which I expect to respect the mandate that the new Government was given at this election. If there is one issue that dominated the last three years it has been the carbon tax and if there is one point that my colleagues and I have been making over and over and over again, since February of 2011, it is that we will repeal this toxic tax. This Parliament has one duty first and foremost and that is to repeal that tax. I understand that. Julie Bishop understands that. All of my assembled parliamentary colleagues understand that. The Australian people absolutely understand that the last election was a referendum on the carbon tax and they have spoken about as decisively as the people can at an election.

The only people who are in denial about the result of the last election, well, we know who they are. It's good old 'Electricity' Bill Shorten, good old 'Electricity Bill' Shorten and his Green colleagues. Now, I say respectfully to the Leader of the Opposition, you are better than this. You are better than this. We all know that you didn't support the carbon tax. We all know that you thought the former prime minister was making a terrible mistake. Well, just for once, just for once, stand up and do what you think in your heart is right rather than simply engaging in a crass political calculation. Otherwise, you will be in every respect but a carbon copy, a carbon copy of Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd and why would you want three Labor leaders in a row to be carbon copies of each other?

The Labor Party went to the last election claiming that the carbon tax had somehow been terminated. Well, that was wrong. That was wrong. The public knew it was wrong. The public knew that the only way to

terminate the carbon tax was to change the government so I say to Bill Shorten and I say to all of his parliamentary colleagues, make honest MPs of yourselves, and actually vote to terminate this toxic tax.

Friends, there is no greater honour that any Member of Parliament can have than to lead his Party and to lead our country. I am so conscious of the honour that my Party has done me and of the honour that the country has entrusted to me. I am so conscious of that and I pledge to you and to the citizens of Australia, I will not let you down. I pledge to my fellow Liberals and to the citizens of our country, my colleagues and I will not let you down. We will do what we said we would do to the very best of our ability, with all of our energy, with every fibre of our being.

And I am convinced that this result will be good for our country because I am confident that our values do resonate with the people of Australia. We are a Party which trusts the community. We don't mistrust government but we look to the community for solutions before we look to the state. We are a Party which trust individuals. We don't mistrust officials but we look to individuals before we say 'Let's call in the officials'. We are Party which instinctively believes that the good sense of the Australian people is most likely to produce the best outcomes and wherever people can make things happen on their own, government should be there to encourage it rather than to control it. That's what we stand for. That's what we believe in the marrow of our bones, and that, I am confident is what resonates most strongly with our people.

We are a great country. We are a great people. I believe that we now have a better government, a better government which can deliver the people of Australia the better country that we all yearn for and that we all deserve.

Thank you so much.

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