

**The Hon Julia Gillard MP**  
**Minister for Education. Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations**  
**Minister for Social Inclusion**  
**Deputy Prime Minister**

## **Transcript - Press Conference - Hobart**

**11AM FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 2009**

**ISSUES: Clean Start campaign; Child care; Tsunami in Samoa; Earthquake in Sumatra; Liberal Party.**

**JULIA GILLARD:** It's great to be here this morning at this meeting of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union in Tasmania and I'm pleased to be joined by the Branch Secretary, David O'Byrne.

I'm here today to talk to leaders of this union about the Government's Fair Work agenda, about how we've got rid of Work Choices and replaced it with a system that brings fairness and decency at work. And we are particularly concerned to bring fairness and decency at work into the lives of Australia's cleaners.

We know right around the country there are cleaners who clean office buildings, who clean schools, and many of them don't get a fair go. Many of them don't get a fair go even though their employer would like to give them a fair go, but the competitive pressure in the contract cleaning industry has often meant that those employers who are prepared to cut pay and conditions win.

We want to break that cycle. We want to join with the union in its Clean Start campaign. The Australian Government's already announced that we want to make sure the people who clean Australian Government buildings are treated decently.

Today I've announced that I will write to state and territory workplace relations Ministers around the country and ask them to join with us in this campaign to make sure people who clean public buildings are treated decently - the people who clean the local school, the people who clean the local Centrelink office, the people who clean the local state government building - and I'm confident by working together with the union, we can make a difference in the lives of Australian cleaners.

**JOURNALIST:** Has Tasmania already agreed to that support?

**JULIA GILLARD:** I'll get David to comment on this as well but the Tasmanian Government has been showing the way here. It has been an early adopter of the Clean Start campaign and an early adopter of the agenda to make a real difference for fairness and decency at work for Australian cleaners, but David might like to comment.

**DAVID O'BYRNE:** The Tasmanian Government has recently made an announcement to support the Clean Start campaign, not only in principle, but in action in terms of the procurement policy. This announcement today by Julia and her announcement a few months

ago for the Federal Government to join that campaign means that building owners across the country will have an ethical say in who cleans their buildings.

This will make an enormous difference to cleaners' lives, but it means that they'll have enough time to do the work, they'll get decent pay, decent conditions and most importantly the quality of their clean will be of the highest standard. And this is the Federal and state governments working together with working people to make sure there is a fantastic outcome for cleaners on the job.

**JOURNALIST:** Are there any other states besides Tasmania that have already signed onto this campaign?

**DAVID O'BYRNE:** The ACT Government, the South Australian Government and a number of other state governments are about to make an announcement in relation to Clean Start. A number of state governments are looking at their buildings, looking at their tenanted offices to ensure that not only the Clean Start principles will be supported by building owners, but in action, in procurement policy, they'll be supported.

**JOURNALIST:** How much of a difference are we talking about in wages and conditions as part of the Clean Start principles?

**DAVID O'BYRNE:** Often for cleaners, it's not necessarily the hourly rate, although that's important, it's enough time to do the job, it's proper chemicals, it's proper occupational health and safety and that's why it's not just about money. It's about the whole job and how the whole job looks to a cleaner, and how that job looks to a person working in an office to know that they can work in a hygienic environment and that their office will be cleaned each night and they can have a good job.

**JOURNALIST:** Do you think it's because cleaners usually do their jobs out of hours that some employers have been able to get away with treating them the way they shouldn't?

**DAVID O'BYRNE:** I think there are two pressures on cleaners; one is that they are the hidden worker, people rarely actually see them but they always see the work that they do; and the other is the competitive nature of the contracting system. And a lack of an ethical base and a lack of a procurement policy which supports that ethical base has meant that cleaners are squeezed not only in time but in lack of chemicals and that's where accidents occur; and a downward spiral of wages and conditions. Decisions by building owners, by governments and in the private sector have meant that that spiral will stop and cleaners get a decent job and they can work in a decent environment.

**JOURNALIST:** Are child care workers also getting a fairer go, I suppose, and why is that and will wages increase do you think as a result?

**DAVID O'BYRNE:** Prior to the election of the Rudd Government, there was a market response to the provision of the early years and child care and that meant essentially that if you could afford it you could get it, but the workers and the families in those environments were not front and centre.

With the election of the Rudd-Gillard Government and the recent announcements at COAG has meant that child care professionals now have a voice. They are now being respected and treated with dignity and wages, conditions, ratios, group sizes, qualifications and curriculum,

as I said, will now be a focus and that has brought forward the Australian early years sector from being virtually the last place in the OECD to hopefully in the first place.

**JULIA GILLARD:** Can I just add to that, the Rudd Government fundamentally believes that Australian parents who use child care want two things; they want to know when they drop their very, very precious child off at the centre that the quality of the care is going to be of the highest possible standard, entrusting your child to someone else's care is a big thing to do. They want to know it's high quality care; and of course they want help with the cost pressures that come from paying child care fees.

We want to make sure that it's quality care through our national quality agenda, including working with the workforce for higher standards and higher training, and we've made a big difference to working families on the costs of care through increasing our child care tax rebate, so that it meets 50 per cent of the out of pocket costs of paying for child care.

**JOURNALIST:** Can I just ask you about the Sumatran earthquake, is Australia doing enough to support Indonesia in this?

**JULIA GILLARD:** My colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, is taking continuing advice during the day and will be available during the day for media to keep updating that advice.

We, of course, have indicated to the Indonesian Government that we are willing to help, they have now asked for our help. We have officials already out on the ground who have moved from Jakarta to the affected area to assess needs. We've worked with Indonesia before to deal with natural disasters when people have been hurt and distressed, and so many Indonesians have been killed. We are going to do that again.

**JOURNALIST:** (inaudible) the long haul?

**JULIA GILLARD:** We have shown in the past that when it comes to natural disasters we have been there for the long haul. We have officials in Indonesia now already working. My colleague, Stephen Smith, will be updating on this during the course of the day.

We are of course providing aid and assistance to Samoa as well as it deals with the aftermath of the tragedy there, and I note being here in Tasmania, I passed the condolences of the Australian Government publicly to the Blacker family yesterday, a well known Tasmanian family, and of course our thoughts are with the relatives and friends of Maree Blacker who are grieving her loss, and John Blacker who himself was injured in Samoa, has now been returned to Australia through medical evacuation.

**JOURNALIST:** Malcolm Turnbull is prepared to put his job on the line over ETS. Do you think Kevin Rudd is prepared to do the same if you don't get it through the Senate?

**JULIA GILLARD:** Can I say about the Liberal Party, I really think it's time that Malcolm Turnbull and the Liberal Party started talking about the national interest rather than talking about themselves. We've heard lots, in the last 24 hours or so, about Malcolm Turnbull talking about Malcolm Turnbull, Malcolm Turnbull talking about the Liberal Party, but what Australians are interested in is the national interest and the national interest is about tackling the challenge of climate change. That's what our Government's focused on. Malcolm Turnbull needs to stop talking about himself and the Liberal Party and start talking about the real things that matter for the national interest.

**JOURNALIST:** Would Kevin Rudd put his job on the line for it, though, if it is that important?

**JULIA GILLARD:** Kevin Rudd campaigned to get his job on the basis that this nation needed to deal with climate change. The previous government, which Malcolm Turnbull was a part, had wasted more than a decade in climate change denial, scepticism and inaction. We went to the Australian people in 2007 and Kevin Rudd said to the Australian people, 'if you elect me this is what I am going to do'. We are seeking to deliver on that promise.

**JOURNALIST:** How do you think Malcolm Turnbull is going to go with his 'back me or sack me' call?

**JULIA GILLARD:** That's all a matter for the Liberal Party but I really think Australians aren't interested in the Liberal Party talking about the Liberal Party. Australians are interested in the big issues that matter for this nation's future and what leaders have to say about those big issues. So, we want to hear from Malcolm Turnbull on the substance, not Malcolm Turnbull on Malcolm Turnbull or Malcolm Turnbull on the Liberal Party, but Malcolm Turnbull on the substantive challenge of dealing with climate change.

**JOURNALIST:** Do you think they're going to back him or sack him?

**JULIA GILLARD:** I think that's a matter for the Liberal Party, but I want to hear from the Liberal Party is where do they stand on dealing with the challenge of climate change. We've heard as many different views almost as there are Liberal Party members; well this is too important a national and global issue for the Liberal Party to spend their days frittered away in disunity and division. The Liberal Party should be talking about the national interest which is in dealing with climate change.

**JOURNALIST:** What about their point, and you've obviously been in opposition yourself, this idea that the Opposition just can't say no to everything and that they've got to engage and negotiate. That seems to be the argument that the Liberals are wrestling with, can you give us any insights on that?

**JULIA GILLARD:** I've always thought that political leaders and political parties want to be judged on what they stand for rather than what they stand against. Mr Turnbull and his Liberal Party to date have been solely defined on what they stand against. They stand against economic stimulus, they stand against supporting jobs during a global recession, they stand against the biggest school modernisation program the nation's ever seen, they stand against our Fair Work system and our end to Work Choices, and the list goes on.

The job for Malcolm Turnbull and his Liberal Party is to stop talking about themselves and start talking about the things they stand for in the national interest.

**JOURNALIST:** If they sack him, who could possibly take over, do you think?

**JULIA GILLARD:** Well that is most definitely a matter for the Liberal Party.

Thank you very much.

**ENDS.**