

Interview with Eddie McGuire and Mick Molloy, Triple M Hot Breakfast

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Malcolm Turnbull joining us in in the studio this morning, good morning Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning. Eddie, good to see you.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Great to have you with us. Mick Molloy is going to have the first question to the Prime Minister this morning.

MICK MOLLOY:

Thank you for the honour, it's like the first question in Question Time. Today I wanted a question without notice Prime Minister. Have you noticed the dramatic weight loss of our good friend? What a good guy. We're watching you on a TV screen on Sky and Prime Minister you have to remember, the camera adds ten pounds. Have a look at that.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well for a minute I didn't think it was Eddie I thought it was a sort of a mystery baby brother, you know? Fifteen years younger. But it emerged –

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

No.

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

He's looking good. He's looking good.

MICK MOLLOY:

But of course you, do you, was this something he's adopted from your recent past? Some kind of diet?

PRIME MINISTER:

Tell us what you've done Eddie.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I actually did Prime Minister, you mentioned this a while back when you decided to get yourself fit. I remember asking and you said, you mentioned this Chinese doctor in Sydney who helped you get started. As a result of that I thought: "Right, okay, I'm ready to go as well". A little bit like yourself, not as busy as you of course, but wanted to do it to get myself ready to go so I could sort of have a new chapter in the book. Keep myself fit, because that was my natural weight. This doctor as we know, his whole thesis is, it's not about losing weight necessarily, it's about getting you back to your natural shape again. So I did it, I knocked off 15 in about three and a half weeks.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well that's brilliant.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I think we almost did the same, exactly the same.

PRIME MINISTER:

We did, I lost just under 15 kilos in a month, which I think was probably too fast. But both of us being the type of personalities we are, have probably been a bit too ambitious. But the key, what I found Eddie was that when I realised that I could control my appetite I found it enormously liberating. So now, some years later, if my clothes are getting a bit tight, I just say, alright, I'll just eat less for a couple of days. You get that, once you realise your brain can actually control your stomach, your appetite, that's the progress. Because clearly the way to lose weight is to eat less.

MICK MOLLOY:

Two words gentlemen, stomach staple.

PRIME MINISTER:

No, no, no. Discipline.

[Laughter]

Eddie and I have done it. It's the discipline.

MICK MOLLOY:

Yeah, let's talk about the front page of the Herald Sun.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, the front page of the Herald Sun. What about, Regional Rail? A 1.6 billion dollar investment.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Congratulations Prime Minister. Yep, it's a great coming together of you and

the state government. But it's your money you've released it and it's a tremendous.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah well, it's almost all our money, we're putting in \$1.42bn into Regional Rail and they're putting in 150 million –

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

But this is wonderful Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, it is.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Do you really see yourself Malcolm, as being a nation building Prime Minister? You've had various shackles on you, you know, through the course, but the last couple of weeks with the Gonski report into the education getting through. Now this. These are things that are really starting to make an impact in our state.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah they are. This is fantastic. I mean Victoria has got a lot of natural advantages, you know, a great capital city which is by and large flat. So that makes it much easier to build infrastructure. You've got great provincial or regional cities which are relatively close to Melbourne but you obviously need to invest in the rail infrastructure to bring them closer together. Good transport infrastructure is absolutely vital for a 21st century economy and that's what we're doing. So this is going to add 1000 jobs Eddie, in Victoria. 400 of them will be in the La Trobe Valley.

Now you know, I was just listening on the radio this morning to some guys from Morwell who are obviously, you know, unhappy and dispirited with the closure of Hazelwood and the consequences of that. Well, here is 400 new jobs coming out into the La Trobe valley thanks to the investment my Government is making in Victorian infrastructure.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I think the next part of it, the extrapolation of what's happened now, is in fact that these regional centres can become real regional centres. I.e. you can get the train now into Melbourne if you want to go to university. There's going to be the opportunity for people who can't afford housing in Melbourne or the metropolitan area to have a tree change and do it legitimately. Actually build a lifestyle around living in these wonderful country areas.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yep, absolutely. You get people communing both ways you know, there as many

people commuting into Ballarat for jobs as commuting out of it I was told last night. So, this is the important thing, you knit all of these cities together and you create greater options. It has a fantastic impact on housing affordability.

Because it's important to understand that distance is measured in minutes not in kilometres. So if you can bring cities – whether it is the Waurin Ponds upgrade out in Sarah Henderson's electorate out in Corangamite just at Geelong if you do that, improving the rail lines at Geelong. Whether you're improving the rail line out on the Gippsland rail line, or up to Shepparton and the North East Line, all of these make a massive difference in improving the opportunities and the options for people who can work there. They can have their business there, they can live there and go to Melbourne or people in Melbourne can go out and work at a business out in a regional centre.

So tying it all together with good rail is vital. So I'm delighted that we're putting in this massive investment into Victorian infrastructure.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Prime Minister pardon the pun but you seem to be on a roll at the moment. Is this because you've been able to get control of things within your own Party and starting to really stamp your prime ministership on this term? You know, you came in, you had tremendous approval ratings because people were waiting for Malcolm Turnbull to start calling the shots. Clearly, we all understand the politics that goes on and the various factions and all the other things that are there particularly in a tight parliament. But do you feel now, that you're starting to loosen the shoulders and Malcolm Turnbull is now starting to stride forward?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well he always has been, I always have been. Look Eddie the important thing is we're making sure that the 45th Parliament works. You know, we've only got 29 seats out of 76 in the Senate so we need the support – if we can't get Labor or the Greens support – we need the support of ten crossbenchers to get legislation through. And a lot of people said: "Oh, that would be impossible." But you look at that big school reform. I mean this is the first time in our history.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Yep. Excellent.

PRIME MINISTER:

We've got nation, consistent, needs-based funding for schools right across the country. It's a massive reform and it is a great Liberal National reform. It's a Coalition reform putting our stamp on school funding now and into the future. And it's fair. That's the critical thing, it's fair.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Prime Minister, we've had Christopher Pyne come out and he was mentioning various things about marriage equality. I understand last night that Tony Abbott had a bit of a whack at Christopher Pyne about being disloyal. Cory Bernardi is starting his far right party at the same time and Andrew Bolt giving you a clip every other day in the Herald Sun –

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh, is it every *other* day?

[Laughter]

I don't think he misses a day, does he?

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Okay I take that back. Andrew Bolt every day, he gives you a clip.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh yes, it's knocking me around I can tell you.

[Laughter]

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I can imagine. But it is a strange old situation at the moment isn't it? The middle ground of politics which you've held for so long, seems to be getting a renaissance right around the world at the moment. People seem to be coming back to the middle again as we've seen over there in Great Britain but also with the success of these policies you've promulgated in the last couple of weeks.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well there is no question that the vast bulk of the population is in the sensible centre. They want politicians to work through the problems. They want us to explain the problems, the issues, explain what the challenges are and then come up with the solutions. That's what we've been doing with one issue after another. We've dealt with child care, a very big reform there. We're dealing with business, obviously we've reducing taxes on small and medium businesses, that's vital for employment. Look at the recent jobs figures, you know. We talked about jobs and growth in the election campaign and plenty of people poked fun at us about that. But it's not a slogan, its an outcome. We're actually seeing it, in a tough economic climate globally. Of course we've talked about schools.

You know Eddie, the reality is energy prices – look at that – look at the pressure people are coming under with higher energy prices. Now that has not been a triumph over the last decade of energy policy. We are working through that methodically. With Josh Frydenberg, great Victorian MP, Energy Minister, we're dealing with gas. We've had a gas shortage on the east coast, contributed to I have to say, by the Victorian Labor Government that won't

allow gas exploration and development onshore in Victoria. But we're taking the steps to limit exports now, of gas from the east coast to ensure there is enough gas locally. We're removing the right for the energy companies to appeal against decisions on what they can charge for their poles and wires.

So again, one step after another, as practical men and women founded on engineering and economics, getting the answers right to protect Australians.

MICK MOLLOY:

Prime Minister that's all very well and good. But I have to ask you this: is there any chance that we can get a pardon for Johnny Depp? I think this is something that may get you across the line at the next election.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, well –

MICK MOLLOY:

It's a vexing issue. Your Deputy won't let it go away, do you have it within your vast powers to give Johnny Depp some kind of pardon, so we can put this to bed once and for all?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well.

[Laughter]

I wouldn't want to come between Johnny and Barnaby, you know. Sort of the pirate meets the cowboy, right? What do you reckon?

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

It'd be a good battle.

PRIME MINISTER:

Maybe they could make a movie together.

MICK MOLLOY:

That would be right, you could fund it.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Two quick ones. Network Ten.

PRIME MINISTER:

Its déjà vu all over again isn't it?

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

It is. You've seen this one a few times, this time as Prime Minister. How important is it for this country to have a third commercial network up and going and of course, the other issues being put into play by the Murdoch family being involved in this as well. Cross ownership etcetera.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Eddie, it's vitally important. I mean we've got fantastic free-to-air television in Australia in terms of the range of channels. It compares favourably, I think, I don't think you can look at any other market in the world where there is as much high quality programming on free-to-air TV as there is in Australia. I mean all of the premium sport is on free-to-air, which is obviously not the case in many other markets. Now as far as Ten is concerned, obviously Ten has got its own issues.

As you know, 25 years ago, Luce and I were involved in restructuring the Ten Network when it went broke last time. But we're not applying to do that again! Someone else, another generation can deal with it. But what they need – what we need to do – is to reform these utterly outdated media ownership laws. They were written in a time when the internet didn't exist. When actually, when pay TV didn't exist.

So we've got that media reform package in the Senate now and we're urging the senators to support it. The Labor Party should support it. If the Labor Party cares about jobs, they'd back it in, because as all of the TV executives have said, if we can change these outdated laws to allow the media groups to merge and consolidate and support each other in very challenging times, where the real competition is not each other Eddie, its Google and Facebook. And so these Australian media companies need to be able to consolidate and strengthen, that will enable jobs to be preserved. I mean there are hundreds of jobs at risk at Ten and the way to protect them, the best thing government can do is to make the laws 21st Century laws, not 1980's laws which is basically where we are at the moment.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Great stuff. Have you got one final question?

MICK MOLLOY:

Yes, am I in any danger of getting my NBN?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

MICK MOLLOY:

I live in Richmond, an inner city suburb in a major city and I'm still not connected. I know you as Minister for Communications and now Prime Minister, you'd be able to help me out here?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm not going to come around –

MICK MOLLOY:

[Laughter]

Personally to do it, put you hardhat on?

PRIME MINISTER:

With screwdriver and a drill and you know, a digger. But –

MICK MOLLOY:

Where are we at?

PRIME MINISTER:

OK, I'll tell you where we're up to. The project will be, in a week, half done.

MICK MOLLOY:

Yep.

PRIME MINISTER:

So there's well over 5 million premises where it's available. There's about 2.5 million people have got accounts. They're adding about 30,000 currently about 30,000 new paying customers a week. It's rolling out at an extraordinary pace. It'll be three quarters built in a year from now on 30 June 2018. It'll be complete, you know, by 2020, possibly a little bit before that. So it is hurtling along at a very fast pace but it is a gigantic project.

It was a complete train wreck when I inherited it, when I became Communications Minister in 2013. We put in a new board, new management team, Ziggy Switkowski as chairman, Bill Morrow as chief executive, done a fantastic job. So they will get to you but obviously you can't get to everyone on the day, on day one.

MICK MOLLOY:

Now I just have an image of you turning up out the front of my house, in a ute with a flag on the bonnet

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, yeah that's right. And a crowbar.

MICK MOLLOY:

[Inaudible] [Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

And you've got this vision of me putting the crowbar through the water main-

MICK MOLLOY:

That would be funny.

PRIME MINISTER:

Followed by, hopefully not followed by the power line because I'll electrocute myself.

MICK MOLLOY:

Very good well I'll wait.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

And Lucy coming behind you fixing it all up, just as she does at home.

PRIME MINISTER:

That would right, that would be right.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I understand today is a big day as well. A new chief executive will be announced at Australia Post, we won't put you on the spot, we'll let that announcement come this morning. But that's another step forward and another great Australian.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, it is a great Australian, a great hire actually, yep.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Yep, more Collingwood board members in high positions, that's what I want.

PRIME MINISTER:

You heard it first from Eddie McGuire. Eddie, first with the mail.

MICK MOLLOY:

There it is.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

There we go. I think you can have the morning off Malcolm.

Hey Prime Minister, thanks for dropping by. We really appreciate the fact that you came in to speak to our Triple M listeners whenever there's good news and bad news but it's always a pleasure having you with us in the

studio.

PRIME MINISTER:

It's good to be here, great to see you.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Good on you mate. Malcolm Turnbull joining us on Triple M's Hot Breakfast.

[ENDS]