

ABC RN Drive, Extract from “Jeff Kennett on Bishop and Goodes”, 30 July 2015

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive/kennett-on-bishop-and-goodes/6661120> and

https://abcmedia.akamaized.net/rn/podcast/2015/07/rnd_20150730_1806.mp3

Comments on Adam Goodes commence at 6:15. Transcript by Paul Mahony, 19 July 2019

Presenter: Patricia Karvelas, RN Drive

PK: What’s your take on the Adam Goodes issue? It’s become a huge national issue, really getting much beyond sport.

JK: Yes, you’ve got to understand there are a number of indigenous players currently playing, and past players, and I cannot remember any of them attracting this sort of attention. So you have to ask yourself why is he attracting the attention. And I think there are four or five issues that clearly stand out.

There was, in many people’s mind, the idea that he used to play for free kicks, and that often riled the supporters of the opposing team.

There was, of course, the singling out of that young girl who made an inappropriate comment about Adam, and I can understand his upset but he was still calling her the face of racism the next day, which I think is a fairly hard . . .

PK: I don’t know if that’s entirely what happened though.

JK: I’m sorry, you’re asking me my opinion, it did happen.

There was the acceptance by him of the honour of becoming the Australian of the Year, and on that occasion he said this should be called Invasion Day.

More recently of course, there’s been the performance of his dance on the field, in a colosseum, a sporting field against or towards a number of supporters.

The point I’m making is, in recent times, as good a footballer as he is, he has provoked the public or sections of the public in various different ways.

PK: But most of the ways . . .

JK: And when you provoke people, you shouldn’t be surprised if they respond, and I would argue very strongly, based on there is no evidence of any racism against any other Aboriginal player, that in fact this isn’t an act of racism, this is an act of where many in the community feel as though they’ve been provoked, and they are responding to that provocation.

As I said, I’ve pointed out four or five instances. Adam is a very proud man, I understand that. But if you’re going to poke someone in the eye, don’t be surprised if they try and poke you back.

PK: Are you really surprised Jeff Kennett that an indigenous person who has felt like he has suffered racism his entire life would want to talk about those issues and elevate those issues to talk against racism. Does that surprise you?

JK: Patricia, it matters not. The things that I've said have been part of Adam's conduct in the past couple of years. No one forced him to do it, he did it himself. So therefore, people in a sporting field, in a colosseum, have responded against those acts. It isn't a response against, it isn't a response based on racism. Now Adam interprets it that way.

PK: And a lot of Aboriginal people seem to agree with him.

JK: Pardon.

PK: A lot of Aboriginal people seem to agree with him.

JK: I can understand that, but we have made huge advances in recent years, and the very fact that Adam was made Australian of the year is recognition of both his worth¹ and his importance and the way the community has moved forward. But the moment he then stands up and says I accept this great honour, that this should be Invasion Day, is provocative to many.

PK: But don't you . . .

JK: So all I'm saying is, please don't be surprised that on the sporting field, this is where these things happen. There are some people who are responding to, in recent times, some of the comments and actions that he has played out. And he wasn't booed years ago. He wasn't booed three or four years ago.

PK: That's right, he's being booed after he's elevated indigenous affairs, after he's made it his primary issue.

JK: Don't try to get away from the fact he's being booed because of a number of incidents where he has been the perpetrator of those acts. And if you're going to, if I'm going to, God bless me, if I'm going to do something that affects you, or I don't understand, you're likely to come back at me, you're going to challenge me. Now that's all that is happening.

What's happening at the moment is people are blowing this up out of all proportion, and it's sadly so, and I don't like it, but please, I don't want the ABC, and I don't like the public saying that everyone who boos is a racist. It's simply not the case, and at my football club we have three or four wonderful young first people's players. We've had players for years of indigenous background. They've never been booed but on the other hand . . .

PK: Is it perhaps that they haven't been booed perhaps because they haven't called Australia Day Invasion Day. Is that one of the reasons?

¹ Kennett may have said "work" rather than "worth". The audio was unclear.

JK: It's not just one thing, it's a collection of things. Our young men are out there, as Adam is, in the field, working with their own community, working with the non-indigenous community, but they're not provoking people if they're reacting against certain issues.²

PK: Why are we so troubled though as a nation if an indigenous man does provoke, if we are to accept your premise.

JK: I don't mind him provoking but if he provokes, then don't be upset if the public also respond to that provocation. I mean . . .

PK: If he's Australian of the Year, a dual Brownlow medallist, he's clearly a hero to many, shouldn't he be cheered into retirement rather than booed into retirement.

JK: Well yes, he should be, but if he's going to provoke people, then he should not be surprised if they respond. So when he did his dance at the MCG, directly into that group of people, they responded. That has had a flow on effect, and the more people talk about it, and the more people say to a sporting community, "oh, you shouldn't be booing", the more likely it is that it'll go the other way, as wonderful a footballer as he is, as wonderful an indigenous personality as he is. If you go out there and provoke people, you're going to get a response, and for you to say to me, "why should people respond to that provocation" amazes me. It shows you have no idea how the community is and acts.

PK: I have some idea, I live in the community Jeff Kennett, but we're going to have to leave it at that. Thanks so much for coming on RN Drive.

JK: Great pleasure Patricia. You have a good day.

PK: I'll try. That's Jeff Kennett, former Victorian premier and former president of Hawthorn Football Club.

² The audio was unclear for the second half of this sentence.