

Transcript

Station: **2GB** Date: **10/03/2006**
 Program: **ALAN JONES** Time: **08:15 AM**
 Compere: **ALAN JONES** Summary ID: **S00021199431**

Item: **2GB AND GOSFORD STADIUM OWNER JOHN SINGLETON SPEAKS WITH JONES ABOUT ALLEGATIONS THAT HE WAS GOING TO BUY THE SOUTH SYDNEY RABBITHS AND MOVE THEM TO GOSFORD.**

INTERVIEW: JOHN SINGLETON, BUSINESSMAN.

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	96000	99600	195600	32600	95400

ALAN JONES: Well I'm sorry to say, but this whole business about the privatisation of South Sydney, what's known as the Peter Holmes a Court proposal has reached ludicrous and ridiculous levels.

There was a news story the night before last, which passed off as a news story anyway, presented on Channel 9. It wasn't news at all, it was gossip. And it argued that there had been an amazing twist, those were the words used, in the battle for South Sydney. That Peter Holmes a Court had claimed that John Singleton was behind a rival bid and that would all be unveiled this week. And the reason for the bid was that John Singleton, who owns the stadium at Gosford, was going to buy South Sydney and take the team to Gosford.

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ABs = Managers, administrators, professions. GBs = Grocery buyers.

Metro TV demographics are supplied by OzTAM, Radio and Non-Metro TV demographics are supplied by ACNielsen

(*) - Indicates unknown spelling or phonetic spelling.



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That led to John Singleton's mobile phone number being plastered on a website, inviting people to tell John Singleton what they thought of him. No one checked the story with John Singleton.

Let me say two things; John Singleton is owner of this radio station; he's also the owner of the Central Coast Stadium. My understanding is that John Singleton had had nothing to do with the South Sydney bid and has spoken to no one and heard from no one. So you wonder what's going on.

And if Peter Holmes a Court has so badly lost his marbles on all of this it must raise serious questions about whether or not he should be having anything to do with South Sydney.

Singo is on the line. Singo, good morning.

JOHN SINGLETON: Good morning Alan.

JONES: A news story it was, it was no more than gossip.

SINGLETON: It wasn't. And Danny Weidler did ring me to correct that, he did ring me. I told him it was a 100 per cent untrue. I hadn't heard of the people he was talking about. I've made no bid. I didn't even think the privatisation of South Sydney was the right thing to do in any case. And George Piggins is a life long friend of mine, if I was going to do something I wouldn't be doing it behind his back. So they printed the whole story and then said I denied it.



So it was a lot of gossip and also, was made worse by having photographs I'm told, I haven't seen it, of me on the phone so it looked like I was part of the story, cooperating with their story even though it was one hundred, well thousands per cent, more than a hundred per cent scuttlebutt.

JONES: A part of a plot being hatched for you to take Souths to the Central Coast and Peter Holmes a Court, said so, this means if there's a vote for the other people opposing him, is a vote for Souths to go the Central Coast.

SINGLETON: Well...

JONES: You attended a secret meeting with Benny Elias?

SINGLETON: No, I've had no meeting. I mean, I've met many times with Benny Elias, since he was 16 years old I've known Benny Elias. I've had no meetings with him about South Sydney or this company, Champion, or with anyone else directly or indirectly about South Sydney.

JONES: Extraordinary isn't it? The story said a senior member of the 'no' campaign team told me that John Singleton is prepared to underwrite the bid of \$4.8 million as long as the club moves to the Central Coast. That's what the story said.

SINGLETON: Well, it's just not right. The facts are these; that we were approached by Shane Richardson months and



months and months ago to see whether the Central Coast Stadium would guarantee the same gates, the same corporate support, the same dollars as playing in an empty house at Homebush. The answer was yes.

And then Shane Richardson came back to my office and said the board had instructed him it must be in the Sydney metropolitan area, so our bid could not be considered. I told him I thought that was pretty foolish, but if that was it, that was it.

JONES:

Well, surely this raises significant questions doesn't it about the way this whole thing's been handled. About this proposal, about the privatisation, I mean, surely if a company was going to demutualise like NRMA, a case for the 'no' vote would be put to the members as well as the case for the 'yes' vote.

SINGLETON:

Yeah, one would think so. Whether it's the fiduciary duty of a director or not, I'm not sure. I think it would be. But it's certainly the right thing to do.

I did ring David Gallop yesterday and said to David, look I'm now forced into a position, I'm not on the board of Central Coast League, I'm not on the board of the stadium. I'm trying to avoid this controversy, but when my name's been pilloried by Peter Holmes a Court, who did ring me a few times yesterday, I rang him a few times yesterday. Our voices didn't meet. Which is probably just as well



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because I probably would not have been as moderate as I would like.

JONES: As you're being now I might add.

SINGLETON: As I should have been.

JONES: But I mean, surely...

SINGLETON: Is it not true that this is the situation; the members of South, which I think I should be one because I pay 10,000 or 20,000 a year to some Captain's Club or something, probably you thought it up. But maybe that's because I pay so much I don't get a vote.

And I know, as you do, so many of those legends from Souths. They're friends of mine, particularly George, Cootie and McCarthy, these blokes. And I don't know even if any of those two blokes, say Cootie and McCarthy or George, if they wanted to privatise it, and go to Homebush for three years, and forget they've changed their minds overnight. It was down four, tomorrow it will be one. The documents say three years. What's the point of that?

You sell a hundred year of heritage to two blokes, let's assume they're good blokes, I got real doubts at the moment. On Peter Holmes a Court's business record, how about this Alan? I wouldn't have checked it otherwise, he floated AAC which is his family beef company, dollar, dollar, dollar. When



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he left, or whatever, anyway, he's no longer there, it's gone up \$1.70. It's gone 70 per cent without him. So, I mean he knew how to improve that company, it was to get out of it.

So, his business track record's not, we're not dealing here with a Packer or a Murdoch or someone who can... We're only dealing with a short term fix. Homebush cannot fix anything, because if you're successful at Homebush, you're going to have 70 per cent empty seats, if you're unsuccessful, 85 per cent.

JONES:

Yeah, and of course, the offer is for \$3 million but we're told that that will be minus the costs. Why would the club have to pay the costs of the buyer?

SINGLETON:

David Gallop confirmed to me yesterday that the grant from the Rugby League if South Sydney relocated to the Central Coast is \$11 million. So you can take \$3 million and sell your soul to two blokes, good or bad or indifferent. Or \$11 million, own the club, relocate to Central Coast.

When I didn't get involved in this, because there was a vision that Redfern would be rebuilt. Now that vision is gone. So you've got to think, if they do...

JONES:

But if two blokes get control of three quarters of the club and there is an offer on the table to take it to



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the Central Coast for \$11 million and they took it to the coast for \$11 million...

SINGLETON: It would be \$20 million by then.

JONES: Do they get \$9 million bucks?

J SINGLETON: Yeah.

JONES: So they could actually take three quarters of the club, head off to the Central Coast and pocket \$9 million for the \$3 million minus costs that they put in.

SINGLETON: Well, I haven't read the documents because I'm only a member. In theory, that would be the case. And the NRL are so keen to get rid of this cluster of clubs dying in Sydney to move where, move to the fastest growth area in rugby league world, in the Central Coast, with a first class facility, with Mingara, the training complex which is an Institute of Sports style facility. It's all there.

JONES: So what should, if you were advising Souths members, who are listening to you now, what do you say to the Souths members?

SINGLETON: I'd say fellas, look, for a hundred years you've owned this club and you've survived. If you sell it out to any two blokes, no matter, let's assume they're great blokes. For \$3 million it doesn't even



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pay the players next year. You're stuck at Homebush, you're going to die.

If on the other hand you get \$11 million, a lot more than \$3 million, I think you'll agree, the NRL will relocate to the Central Coast. And the public transport, the parking, the travel time is better to Gosford than Homebush. You can actually park there. It's got a world class ground, it holds 20,000.

It'll be chocabloc every game. The stadium at Gosford will guarantee the same income and has done to Shane Richardson as that white elephant at Homebush. So why would you sell out for \$3 million, when for \$11 million you can run the club forever, make a fortune, and in times to come the football club will decide whether it's called Souths still or Central Coast Rabbits or whatever. Why would you sell your soul for \$3 million, when you could maintain ownership.

JONES:

But the point that we're talking this morning is that you haven't been involved in any of these negotiations whatsoever and you are not a counter bidder. That's the point isn't it?

SINGLETON:

Alan, with you, and it's in the form of self defence.

JONES:

And self defence.

SINGLETON:

I don't want to be pilloried, I love rugby league, I would love it to be played at Redfern, I'd love



Newtown to play at Henson, I'd love Balmain to play at Leichhardt and Wests to play at Pratten Park, others at Lidcombe. But life moves on. I'd like Schooners to be a dollar again too, but life does go on.

In the real world, Souths can live forever on the Central Coast. There's more Souths fans living on the Central Coast than at Homebush. And that was in *[inaudible]* day as it is today. I just think, to the other members of Souths, of which I am one, I would say fellas look, and ladies, don't sell your soul for \$3 million. Think about, drive up to the Central Coast, look at the stadium and think, why wouldn't we maintain ownership of the club and be chocabloc here?

JONES: Good on you.

SINGLETON: Why would we not do that?

JONES: Good on you Singo, good to talk to you.

SINGLETON: Lovely to talk to you Alan.

JONES: Okay. John Singleton.

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