



PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP
WOMEN IN SPORT
SYDNEY - 18 FEBRUARY 1993

It is my great pleasure to be here again.

There's no escaping it - if you hold events in election time, you run the risk of a political speech.

I could spare you from this, and tell you everything I know about Australian sportswomen.

This would take a little longer than the five minutes I have been allotted; not because I'm expert, but because the great traditions of Australian sportswomen go back a long way.

This year, of course, the tradition has been added to, particularly in Barcelona and particularly by Kathy Watt who is our guest of honour tonight.

By contrast with our women's sporting traditions, Dr Hewson's Goods and Services Tax has had a very short life: in fact, it is my sincere hope that it has no life at all. Anyway, I have long felt that Australians - particularly Australian sportspeople - are tired of politicians pretending to be expert in sport.

So I'm not going to let you escape.

And just as there is no escaping politics, I might say that there is no escaping the consequences for sport of my opponent's policies.

This gathering tonight is a great illustration of how far women's sport has progressed in Australia.

The Government is proud of the assistance we have been able to provide through the huge increase in funding in recent years, and through the work of the AIS and the Australian Sports Commission.

But of course the Government is not the lifeblood of Australian women's sport - women are, and the voluntary organisations are.

I have to remind you that my opponent promises to cut \$7 million out of the Australian Sports Commission budget; and to introduce a Goods and Services Tax that will make it more difficult for women to participate and voluntary organisations to function.

Sport is a perfect illustration of how the GST will change the Australian lifestyle.

All sporting organisations will be hit by the GST and, as very few of them pay payroll tax, there is not even the partial compensation which some other bodies will get.

There will be a 15 per cent tax on entry and registration fees for competition, on admission charges, on air travel, on basic services, on accommodation and on uniforms.

Sports equipment costs will rise, so will the cost of remedial treatment. So will the cost of all health care, of course.

The GST will apply to coaching courses. The price of swimming lessons for instance.

I recently saw a letter from Forbes Carlisle in which he pointed out that, with a GST, privately run swim centres would lose both customers and income, and governments would be forced to spend millions of dollars if the public's needs were to be met.

He wrote, "Now with the prospect of 15 per cent added to fees, many parents will be forced to drop out... There is no doubt that a GST will result in many less pupils and fewer children learning to swim..."

He goes on to say that "It is certain that sports club memberships would be reduced so again the community would suffer by the imposition of this tax."

Sponsorship will be hit by the GST. Sponsored sports will receive 15 per cent less or the sponsor will have to be asked for extra to maintain the level of funding. Some sponsors will get rebates, but banks, building societies and other financial institutions will not.

Sports clubs will not only have to wear the tax in dollar terms, but in the extra time it takes to be a tax collector and an accountant.

As I have said over the past twelve months and as I keep saying in this election campaign, the goods and services tax will change the lifestyle of Australia.

I happen to believe that it is a completely unnecessary and grossly unfair tax. You don't have to agree with me on that, but I urge you to give careful consideration to

the consequences for your own lives and professions before you give it your approval.

In the last twelve months, Australian women's sport has thrived. Many of the new or expanded programs at the AIS and the Sports Commission have been in women's sport, and the participation of Australian women in sport in the community continues to grow.

I think our approach to sport should be guided by the same principle of fairness and equality which leads us to consider such things as education, health or social security as an Australian birthright. The opportunity should exist for all Australian women to participate at the most basic or the highest levels.

And I think it would be a great pity if the great progress we have made in the last few years, and the institutions and mechanisms we have established, should be undermined.

It remains for me to congratulate the sponsors, the Sports Commission's Women in Sport Unit, the judges and of course, my colleague the Minister, Ros Kelly, for their efforts to develop these awards.

There is no doubt that they play a vital role in encouraging the goals of excellence and participation, not just in sport, but by their example, in other areas of Australian life.

Thank you for having me along.