



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP
DOORSTOP, CIVIC CENTRE, NAURU
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PM: The Prime Minister and I had a meeting as you know at the Pacific Forum a year ago, and in the intervening time he visited Australia, and our bilateral relationship has been chuffing along very happily since and we are very pleased with it, and we resumed defence cooperation and our two way trade is growing, and things are developing quite nicely. We had a chat about our bilateral relationship in broad, some of the trade relationships in particular. The Prime Minister was kind enough to brief me about changes in the political developments in Fiji, including the prospect of constitutional processes. And we had then some discussion about trade opportunities, about Spartica and how it might be better used to do things, and a general chat about our capacity to get along together and do things together.

J: Mr Keating what were you able to say to Mr Rabuka about his request for an ending of some of the rules under SPARTECA, the preferential trade agreement?

SR: I didn't really ask that, after looking at the statistics available to actually, we thought there might be a need to further look at those statistics and see if we can have a common base for our officials to have a better understanding. He gets a picture, I get a picture of the same thing so we thought we would go back and get our people working on basic data.

J: So what would you describe the state of the debate on SPARTECA at the moment as?

SR: I wouldn't even call it a debate really. It is a very general discussion and I am happy with the outcome that we have so far

J: And from your point of view, Mr Keating, what was that outcome?

PM: Well as the Prime Minister said, we have got a trade agreement and a trading relationship which is working, the Fijians product access to Australia, that is in the textiles, clothing area, grew by about 30 per cent by value in the last six months as the quotas have come off. And it means that in any growing changing relationship it is sensible for us to talk about it from time to time. And that's what we have done. And I should hope that we continue to do it. Wherever we can smooth out a wrinkle, here or there, to make these arrangements work better, so much the better. But as the Prime Minister said it is important for us to have the same data so that we are all working off - at the moment there is some variation in our data - so we are working off the same data.

ENDS