



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

HOWARD'S SOUR GRAPES

The Leader of the Opposition's petulant performance on ABC Radio's AM this morning confirms his determination to run down the Australian economy at every opportunity.

Despite his lame assertions to the contrary, John Howard is now publicly imploring the Australian economy to perform poorly, and denigrating the significant economic achievements of the Australian community.

We have just achieved a record seventeenth consecutive quarter of economic growth. Mr Howard claims the September growth figures were "something of a mirage." Next he will be claiming we have had seventeen consecutive mirages.

Mr Howard has now pinned his hopes on negative growth in the December quarter - it is his version of Dr Hewson's pre-1993 election cry that the economy was heading into depression.

Seventeen quarters - some depression!

And in a breathtaking display of hypocrisy, John Howard claimed - incorrectly - that confidence was low in the economy because "what people are reacting to at the moment is the lack of any medium or long term plan from the Government."

This from the Leader of the Opposition who has tried to make a virtue of concealing his policies from the Australian public - his only political strategy.

From John Howard, the Australian people get neither a medium or a long term plan - they simply get whingeing.

His only short term plan - as he confirmed again in Perth yesterday - is to ditch the cross-media ownership rules to put an end to diversity of media ownership in Australia.

After Parliament has risen he dribbles out his sneaky media plan at a Perth doorstep.

Where are the critics now who accused me of making a baseless claim when I said that Mr Packer had him in the bag? Yesterday's statement proves he not only has him in the bag but that he has tied the knot with a silken tassel.

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