



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

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Takeovers of public companies are matters normally left to the judgment of the market subject to compliance with the takeovers code (which is directed to investor protection and fairness) and other relevant legislation.

The Government decided that, in the particular circumstances of Bell's current takeover bid for BHP, a committee of Ministers should hold detailed discussions with representatives of each of the companies.

As a result of these discussions, the Government is satisfied as to the future integrity of the Steel Plan. Attached are copies of the relevant assurances provided by both parties.

As to the revenue implications of the proposed takeover, the Government does not believe, on all the information and advice available to it, that there are any public interest considerations presently apparent which would justify intervention.

In relation to the Trade Practices Act, nothing has emerged which would lead the Government to change its position on the amendment to section 50 which has passed the House of Representatives and is now before the Senate.

It would not be appropriate for the Government to comment further while the bid is before the market and related issues are before the courts.