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PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF DOORSTOP, MANLY OVAL, SYDNEY - 9 JANUARY 1989

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

JOURNALIST: Should Australians be saddened by the death of Emperor Hirohito?

PM: I don't think it's a question of sadness but I think we should understand that while it's appropriate to remember the time of war between our two countries, it is more appropriate to remember now, 44 years after the end of the war, that Japan is our major trading partner and that much of the prosperity of this country depends upon that trading relationship and it's in the interests of this and future generations of Australians to build further upon that strong economic relationship.

JOURNALIST: Why aren't you going to the funeral?

PM: It's very interesting. We have the silly season of the media, there's no political stories, they have to make them up. There was never any intention of the Prime Minister going to the funeral. Never. So the media suggests that now I've made up my mind I'm not going, there's a story. So just understand, silly season of the media that story, nothing more, nothing less.

JOURNALIST: Why was there never an intention to go?

PM: Because it's not appropriate. It's more appropriate that the level of Head of State, that your Head of State goes. The Emperor is not the Head of Government. I'm the Head of Government. The Governor-General is the Head of State of here. So it was never on the cards in any shape or form. I repeat, silly season media beatup. I'm not unhappy about that but just understand that that's all it is and ever was.

JOURNALIST: Are you concerned about some of the comments that have been raised?

PM: Well, I don't think they've been helpful but those who've been associated with war time organisations may make comments like that. Of course Sir William Keys would not make those sorts of comments. It's unfortunate the RSL doesn't have that sort of leadership at this time.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, who will go over to Japan as the representative of Australia?

PM: The Governor-General I imagine will go.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hayden as well?

PM: The funeral as I understand will be after he is Governor-General. If he is Governor-General when the funeral is on he will go. If it's before he is Governor-General and Sir Ninian is still Governor-General he will go. Let me repeat, this is a very uncomplicated position. I wish you wouldn't make something complicated which isn't complicated.

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