



PRIME MINISTER

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, SYDNEY, 20 JANUARY 1992

PM: I'm doing today what I did last week and that is going out into the community and listening to what they have to say and I think it has been a good process. I notice, by the way, that Dr Hewson said in Tasmania last week that I shouldn't be listening, that the business community were only after handouts and obviously what he believes one should do is hand down tablets from on high, don't ask or don't speak to anybody and then slap everybody with a 15 per cent tax on their food and then regard that as reform. So what we're doing is going to business, all sectors of business, and to the trade unions and saying, well, what do you believe should be the steps of reform? How do you believe a recovery ought to be promoted? And that is what I have been doing. Now, on the weekend we had a very interesting episode in politics in Australia where in a by-election, upon which the balance of the State Parliament was held, the Liberal Party lost the seat and Dr Hewson said in the course of the by-election campaign that "let this be a test of the GST". Well to the extent it was a test to the GST, it was a slap on the face of Dr Hewson. Now it was a State by-election, I didn't involve myself in it. It is a great compliment to Bob Carr and the NSW Labor Party. And it was a slapping down for the Coalition. But the extent that Dr Hewson and John Howard campaigned in the by-election, and Dr Hewson said, "let this be a test of the GST" a very flat refusal to the politics of GST and all that came with it. So I just want to say this to Dr Hewson: I'm not taking his advice. That is, to not talk to people. I am going to talk to people - some of our largest and smallest companies, some of our largest and smallest trade unions and I'm going to see that at least the people's views are listened to, weighed and sifted through carefully.

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