



## PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
DEPARTURE DOORSTOP, FAIRBAIRN RAAF BASE, CANBERRA  
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PM: You know that the practice of Australian leaders is when they leave Australia they don't comment on domestic affairs, but as I'm leaving I can comment and I want to just put a few things on the record about Dr Hewson and Mr Howard.

What Dr Hewson showed over the weekend with his heartless policy towards young people, leaving them in a deadend job without training is that he's not a Liberal leader with traditional Liberal values – he's simply a clinical technician. A clinical technician who wants to make everybody wear a penalty, the young wear a penalty and now Mr Howard has let the cat out of the bag by telling us that adult wages will also be slashed and he'll be announcing a new low wage structure for adults. The wage share in our economy this year is at 1960s levels, how much lower do these people want it to go? For the 90 per cent of Australians in work, how much greater penalty does Dr Hewson and Mr Howard want them to wear? Everything that Dr Hewson does is about a penalty, a penalty for young people on wages, leaving them in deadend jobs without training, a penalty on middle aged workers, a penalty on the community with a 15 per cent Goods and Services Tax, everything is about wearing a penalty.

I know Australia has got its troubles at the moment and the recession has been a problem and we've got to work our way out of it, but this Government will not abandon Australia's social values – Australian values. To take the 90 per cent of people in work and slash their wages or to leave our young people destitute of an education and without hope in the future of a decent job and training.

I said in the past that Dr Hewson was a wolf in sheeps clothing and I think on the weekend he reveals himself to be just that – a clinical technician without any understanding of the human equation or Australian social values.

J: What figure are you looking at for a youth wage?

PM: We've got a different approach all together. We're saying that mostly those in the 15 to 19 year age bracket have largely unskilled jobs, and they've largely disappeared and that 15 to 19 ought to be a period a period of vocational preparation. We're the Government that got the retention rates up in school, we're the Government that made the places available in universities, and we're now the Government trying to reconstruct the technical and further education system to give young Australians jobs and hope in the future and not leave them and say we're not training them, we'll leave them in a deadend job and we'll pretend we can expand the number of jobs by cutting the price of their labour.

J: Will your plan ensure that older workers, experienced workers don't get sacked for younger workers in training?

PM: Interestingly I notice Mr Howard today refused to confirm that they would be protecting older workers from displacement by younger more inexpensively paid workers a la the Liberal proposal. The fact is that 90 per cent of Australians are still in work and Dr Hewson and Mr Howard want to savagely cut their wages. As I say the wage share in GDP, the wage share in the economy this year at that 1960s level. What do they want to do to the public of Australia? Make them destitute? Why must they wear penalties? Why is Dr Hewson so penalty prone? Penalties for young people, penalties for middle age workers, penalties for the community with the GST, penalties, pain, sacrifice. What about some joy? Growth, jobs, rise in living standards and jobs for young and older people alike.

J: Mr Keating, what do you hope to achieve from this Forum?

PM: It is a chance for the leaders of the South Pacific, the Pacific area to talk about problems of the area. I think what I'd like to achieve, I don't go there with any particular agenda, just to participate in the discussions on development and environmental issues in the Pacific. I've got a few bilateral meetings arranged with Mr Bolger and the Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr Rabuka and I expect it will be a very interesting meeting.

J: Will you be talking with Mr Carlot about the crisis with Vanuatu?

PM: I will be talking about it I think yes. Senator Evans met him, Senator Evans told me that they still intend that they should expel our diplomat, we've made it clear we don't take very kindly to that so we've cancelled our ships visit for this week. I'll be taking the opportunity to discuss this with Mr Carlot while I'm there.

J: Mr Keating, do you think a drop in interest rates would be enough to stimulate the economy?

PM: At a doorstep or a fencestop I don't think we should go through macro economic settings. Thank you.

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