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## PRIME MINISTER

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The Opposition has decided to bury the Cole Committee's report because it threatened to destroy the Goods and Services Tax once and for all.

Since March, Coalition members have been ducking legitimate criticism of their policies by referring all callers to the Cole Committee and promising that their criticism would be considered there.

The Committee has, in turn, prepared a damning report which has swollen to 800 pages – longer than the original Fightback document.

Sir William Cole was told by Dr Hewson a month ago that his report was unacceptable politically, and he should clean it up.

But even the censored version has proved too hot for Dr Hewson to handle, and he is reneging on his promise to release the report before Christmas. In fact, he will not dare release it before the election.

This is a betrayal of all those groups – cane farmers, tourist operators, bankers, builders, car manufacturers and others – who were fobbed off with clear promises of consideration and who must now be left with a better idea of what Dr Hewson's word is worth.

For their benefit alone, the Opposition should come clean and release the report, no matter how critical it is of Fightback and the GST.

At the insistence of his p.r. minders, Dr Hewson has been talking this week about "listening" to people; his decision to scuttle the Cole Committee shows there is a lot of talking going on – but no real listening.

CANBERRA,  
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