



# PRIME MINISTER

79/94

## STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON PJ KEATING MP

### SACKING OF DR HEWSON

The striking down of Dr Hewson by Mr Downer today means that the divisions in the Liberal Party which have persisted since 1983 are destined to remain.

The Liberal Party has one elected leader and three former leaders in the wings, and the only thing they can agree upon is that their interests will never coincide. This continues to rob the Liberal Party of cohesion, coherence and a sense of purpose.

Dr Hewson correctly believes that policies are the stuff of politics: that without policies there can be no substance to public debate and no political morality.

Mr Downer told a business dinner in Sydney last week that Dr Hewson's mistake in 1993 was to reveal his policies and that he has no intention of doing the same. It is not that he doesn't have policies it is simply that he knows that the public won't like them.

Mr Downer believes that he can participate in the public debate without policies - that is, without revealing his policies.

This action today shows Mr Downer in his true colours as a 1950's style politician who believes that it is sufficient to serve up political rhetoric and loose ideology without addressing Australia's continuing need for reform.

Mr Downer is as far removed from the needs of the modern Australian political system as it is possible to be.

The contest between Dr Hewson and Mr Downer is a contest over the central idea that modern Australian society needs change and that the contemporary electorate deserves a right to evaluate and adjudicate on policy.

Mr Downer may have displaced Dr Hewson from the front bench, but he cannot displace the need for policy substance and policy integrity.

CANBERRA  
26 August 1994