



**PRIME MINISTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP  
DOORSTOP, EPAC NATIONAL STRATEGIES CONFERENCE,  
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**J:** Jeff Kennett has been fairly scathing of your so-called intervention tactics. Do you have any response to those comments?

**PM:** Well, I think, when the Premiers get together the herd instinct takes over - they are braver together than they are individually. The fact of the matter is, that there is a sort of immature view that the Commonwealth should pay for everything the States do including improving the efficiency of their public sectors. Now, the fact is, it is a matter of record that at the Hobart meeting and at the Darwin meeting, the States dragged the chain on competition policy. We kept it alive on both occasions and, largely, different people at different meetings, bludded on the endeavour and they are still at it. So, no noise from Mr Kennett is going to disguise the fact that at the Darwin meeting he lushed out on competition policy. At the first meeting in Tasmania, it was Mr Fahey and Mr Brown. Mr Brown also did the same number in Darwin. So, we will see what happens in the February meeting.

**J:** Aren't you getting a little bit sick of the States. I mean, would you like to really get rid of them?

**PM:** No, I think there this a role for the States -a good and a strong one - but, there is also a role for the national economy. There has to be a national policy on competition and no amount of wriggling and twisting and turning and claims for money will remove that sensible demand.

**J:** If the States don't co-operate how do you go about circumventing their ...

**PM:** I said that last night and in the general application of trade practices legislation we would do it ourselves.

J: Why would he be blaming the Federal Government for the economic ...

PM: Well, why wouldn't they. That is part of the standard stock in trade of Premiers most days. But, we have got the economy growing at around 5 per cent, we have got an inflation rate under 2 per cent, we have got one of the strongest public sector balance sheets in the world. I mean, if there is any problem around the place, it is the fact that we have got these very large state instrumentalities which are not behaving under sensible competitive rules.

J: Doesn't it just hold things up though when the States want to keep attacking the Federals and it just turns into ...

PM: You are not a coverer of Premiers Conferences are you, you are a cheerful person. Well, you should come to one and see what it's all like.

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