USE OF THESES

BRAWLER STATESMAN

Paul Keating and Prime Ministerial Leadership in Australia

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I certify that the substance of this dissertation has not already been submitted for any degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this dissertation, and all sources used, have been appropriately acknowledged.

I certify that the total length of the dissertation is 99,478 words.

Jim Chalmers

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Abstract

Prime ministerial power resides in the institutions of government, and relies on complex interactions between the leader and the leadership environment. The party and the electorate can terminate a leader's tenure, and other institutions such as the media, parliament and sources of advice can all impact on the relative success of the prime minister. How these power sources are navigated is influenced by personal leadership styles. Because these styles vary, there is more than one path to effective leadership and political dominance.

The Paul Keating Prime Ministership (1991-1996) tells us much about prime ministerial power and Australian political leadership. The lessons from his tenure are that prime ministers must maintain support in the electorate and the party room, because power is dependent on interaction with, and the support of, others. Prime Minister Keating was a dominant leader in relation to his colleagues in the caucus and the cabinet; his leadership was individual and authoritative. His downfall was the result of the ultimate power wielded by the Australian electorate used to devastating effect.

Thus prime ministers are only ever as powerful as they are allowed to be; by the party room and by the people. The media and modern competitive electoral pressures provide increasing scope for individual leadership, but neglect of either of these domains still invites political oblivion. Australian prime ministers can act 'presidentially', but only within the confines of public and party expectations.

This thesis utilises new material and an interactionist framework to re-examine the prime ministerial power debate and conclude that powerful leadership relies heavily on a willingness of others to be led. Paul Keating's stores of immense authority and influence relied on his personal approach but also, most importantly, on the compliance of his colleagues in the cabinet and caucus.

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Abbreviations

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANL	Australian National Line
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
ERC	Expenditure Review Committee (of Cabinet)
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
GST	Goods and Services Tax
LHMU	Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union
MUA	Maritime Union of Australia
NCP	National Competition Policy
PJK	Paul John Keating
PM	Prime Minister
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

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Brawler Statesman

> Leadership is not about being popular; it's about being right and about being strong. It's not whether you go through some shopping centres, tripping over TV crew's cords. It's about doing what you think the nation requires, making profound judgements about profound issues[1].

Prime ministers are the focal point of Westminster governments and the subject of intense scrutiny and analysis. They occupy many roles at once, including: head of government; cabinet chairperson; leader of the parliament's majority party; chief spokesperson and media representative; focal point for election campaigns; strategist; policy advocate; manager of staff; and dispenser of patronage. The ultimate judgement of their political leadership rests on their ability to perform these roles more or less successfully. This, in turn, depends upon the prime minister's interactions with colleagues, the public, and the institutions of executive government. These interactions and relationships form the basis of any effective analysis of the prime ministership and, more specifically, of individual prime ministers.

A robust debate over the relative power of prime ministers has been conducted in Westminster polities, in particular in Britain and Australia, since the 1960s[2]. This

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[1] Paul Keating quoted in Mark Ryan, *Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating PM* (Sydney, Big Picture Publications, 1995), p 6.

[2] See John P Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (London, Methuen, 1968); Introduction by RHS Crossman to Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London, Fontana, 1963); Richard E Neustadt, 'White House and Whitehall' in Anthony King (ed), *The British Prime Minister* (London, Macmillan, 1985); George Jones, 'Presidentialization in a Parliamentary System?' in C Campbell and MJ Wyszomirski (eds), *Executive Leadership in Anglo-American Systems* (Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, 1991); Richard Rose, 'Government against Sub-governments: A European Perspective on Washington' in R Rose and EN Suleiman (eds), *Presidents and Prime Ministers* (Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982); Richard Rose, 'British Government: The Job at the Top' in R Rose and EN Suleiman (eds), *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, (Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982); Patrick Weller, *First Among Equals: Prime Ministers in Westminster* Systems (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1985); John Hart, 'President and Prime Minister: Convergence or Divergence?',

debate is concerned with collective authority, as represented by the cabinet and party room, versus the individual power exercised by the leader. Recent analysis has concentrated on the effect of increasing media attention, modern electoral pressures, and the growth and sophistication of prime ministerial support and advice mechanisms as factors contributing to a more individualised model of leadership. As a result of these pressures, the office has evolved to the point where *cabinet* government in its traditional form has given way to *prime ministerial* government. This trend towards individual power is largely restrained by two factors: the party room's power to replace prime ministers with an alternative from within its own ranks; and the electorate's ability to install the leader of the opposition party at election time.

Paul Keating was an authoritative Prime Minister whose tenure in Australia's highest elected office from 1991 to 1996 reconfirms the thesis about prime ministerial government. His was a dominant, authoritarian brand of leadership. He exercised enormous influence over his caucus and cabinet, and his own private office became the key institution of the Government, dwarfing the others in power and responsibility. Keating thus governed from the centre, seeking and acting on the advice of a tiny circle of advisers and confidantes. However, his relationship with the media, and through it the electorate, was fraught with difficulty and led to his ultimate demise. Though his colleagues in the Party and the ministry remained compliant throughout Keating's tenure, the media and the voting public did not.

Paul Keating is an intriguing subject of scholarly investigation because of the questions his prime ministership raises about prime ministerial power and

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Parliamentary Affairs, vol 44, no 2, 1991, pp 208-25; Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945* (Melbourne, Penguin Books, 2001); Peter Hennessy, *The Importance of Being Tony: Two Years of the Blair Style* (Lord Mayor's Lecture, 12 July 1999); Michael Foley, *The British Presidency*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000); Michael Foley, *The Rise of the British Presidency*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993); Anthony Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections*, (Hampshire, Palgrave, 2000); see also Ian McAllister, 'Political Leaders in Westminster Systems' in Hermann Schmitt (ed), *The Changing Impact of Leaders*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004, forthcoming).

leadership style. He remains a unique political figure, and the subject of much academic and journalistic inquiry. However, while biographers have done well to shed light on the Keating persona and on the events of the governments of 1991 to 1996, and commentators have passed myriad judgements on the man himself, a systematic study of Keating's exercise of prime ministerial power and his distinct leadership style is conspicuously absent from the existing literature.

This account fills that void by offering a new perspective on the Keating Prime Ministership which concentrates on the role itself; the office of the Australian PM. It draws upon a fresh set of interviews and a comprehensive re-analysis of the documentary and published record. It adds to the biographical literature by utilising an interactionist approach, and considers personal prime ministerial style in the context of the institutions and constraints of the office.

The dissertation that follows provides a thorough examination of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership in relation to the debate over prime ministerial power. It draws lessons about Australian political leadership from a solid foundation of empirical evidence. It expands on a somewhat dated and incomplete literature and offers a fresh Australian perspective on the nature of the position and the interaction of prime ministers with the institutions of executive government in a Westminster system.

The Paul Keating prime ministership is evidence of the trajectory towards increasingly powerful prime ministers. The concentration of influence in the Prime Minister's Office, Keating's ability to select his own ministry and announce policy unilaterally, his dominance of caucus and cabinet and his monopolisation of both election campaigns all point to an individualised prime ministership absolutely consistent with the prime ministerial power literature.

Further, the interactionist approach relied on by this thesis leads us to the subservience of Keating's cabinet and caucus. The argument throughout is that prime ministers are only ever as powerful as they are allowed to be; by the Party

room, the cabinet, and the electorate. The job is one that exists on the basis of party and electoral support. Prime ministers who don't die or retire, or who aren't dismissed, are subject to two significant removal mechanisms – the election and the party room coup.

Because prime ministers are subject to these constraints they can never be completely dominant; their tenure relies on others. But as the prime ministerial government thesis points out, and this dissertation reconfirms, there is nonetheless scope for the wielding of massive power. Prime ministers have enormous advantages over colleagues because they allocate patronage, chair cabinet, draw on sophisticated advisory and support mechanisms, and enjoy a privileged media and electoral position. The Paul Keating Prime Ministership demonstrates these possibilities, but is also a lesson in the electoral limits of prime ministerial power. When colleagues in the cabinet and caucus are subservient and submissive, the prime minister wields significant power. When they are not, or when the prime minister falls out of favour with the electorate, the opposite is true. Though the potential is great, prime ministerial power, in an interactionist political climate, is thus dependent on the compliance of colleagues and the support of the electorate.

Keating, the ALP and Leadership

When Paul Keating rose to address the National Press Club on the evening of 7 December 1990 in Canberra, the assembled journalists could not have expected the rambling discussion of leadership that was to follow. 'We've got to be led and politics is about leading people', he declared, adding 'politicians change the world and politics and politicians are about leadership'. The 'great societies' were built upon leadership, he argued, but the problem was that Australia 'never had one such person, not one'. Keating saw leadership as 'about having a conversation with the public' rather than 'being popular'. 'It's about being right and about being strong' not 'whether you go through some shopping centre, tripping over

the TV crew's cords' but 'making profound judgements about profound issues'. Keating concluded with some now-familiar words: 'I walk on the stage, some performances might be better than others, but they will all be up there trying to stream the economics and the politics together. Out there on the stage doing the Placido Domingo'. He then added a warning to his political opponents: 'I'm still around after eight years and I'm still walking all over those bloody people opposite, and I'll keep doing it'[3].

In the context of the bitter and longstanding leadership feud between Keating and the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, the speech was seen as an attack on the latter's credentials, constituting one of the first shots fired in the battle for the Australian Labor Party leadership and, by extension, the prime ministership. This bloody conflict spanned two caucus ballots and all of 1991. Eventually Keating was installed as Australia's prime minister on 19 December 1991, one year after the now infamous 'Placido Domingo' speech[4].

Paul John Keating was born 18 January 1944 in Bankstown, Sydney. His rise through the rough and tumble world of Australian Labor Party politics in New South Wales was initially meteoric, so much so that he was elected to the Commonwealth Parliament on 25 October 1969 as the representative of the rock-solid Labor seat of Blaxland at the age of only twenty-five[5]. His extraordinary career included stints as President of the New South Wales Youth Council, Minister for Northern Australia, President of the New South Wales Branch of the ALP, Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia from 1983 until 1991 and a short tenure as Deputy Prime Minister in 1991. Along the way Keating became

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[3] Paul Keating quoted in Michael Gordon, *A True Believer: Paul Keating* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp 3-11. For a slightly different transcript of Keating's unscripted comments see Mark Ryan 1995, op cit, pp 3-8.

[4] For a detailed, blow-by-blow account of the Keating-Hawke leadership challenges and associated events, see Stephen Mills, *The Hawke Years: The Story From the Inside*, (Melbourne, Viking, 1993), pp 199-298.

[5] Once elected to Parliament, Keating reportedly refused to rest on his laurels. Alan Ramsey once wrote that Keating 'wasn't in the place five minutes before he was running in Caucus ballots, twisting arms, organising numbers, and generally operating like a political Sammy Glick who'd

the youngest Labor minister ever, *Euromoney*'s Finance Minister of the Year (1984), and the longest serving federal Treasurer in Labor's long history. As Prime Minister, Paul Keating's legacy was a 'big picture', encompassing Aboriginal issues, Australian economic integration with Asia and the advancement of an Australian republic[6].

Keating's electoral record is mixed, featuring a largely unforeseen triumph in 1993 and a widely-predicted defeat in 1996. The 1993 election saw him pitted against a then-considered formidable opponent – John Hewson – and a comprehensive and detailed reform package – *fightback!* The victory left him vindicated. After appealing to caucus to replace the ageing and under-performing Hawke in 1991, Keating was able to win an election in his own right, allowing him to salute the 'true believers', those who 'in difficult times kept the faith'[7]. But 1996 was to be a different story. Trailing in the opinion polls for the duration of the campaign and unable to make up ground against a resurgent Liberal Party led once again by John Howard, Keating's ALP suffered a heavy defeat. In the inevitable post-election analyses, commentators pointed to the perceived arrogance of the Prime Minister and electoral dissatisfaction with his pursuit of the big picture. Others convincingly argued that by 1996 the Australian electorate had simply had enough of Labor, and it was the Liberals' turn to govern[8].

Before the heavy defeat of 1996, The Labor Party Keating led as Prime Minister had grown accustomed to the Treasury benches, having turned around an unimpressive electoral performance throughout the twentieth century to enjoy thirteen consecutive years in office, the longest stretch in the Party's history. The Labor administrations of Hawke (1983-1991) and then Keating (1991-1996) were reformist in nature. Much energy and political capital was spent on

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pick your pocket while he wheedled your vote'; quoted in David Day, 'Paul John Keating' in Michelle Grattan (ed), *Australian Prime Ministers* (Sydney, New Holland, 2000).
[6] See David Day 2000, op cit.
[7] The words used by the newly elected Prime Minister on election night, 13 March 1993.

reforming the economic infrastructure of Australia, preparing the nation for an international economic climate marked increasingly by globalisation. Not surprisingly, the pursuit of economically rationalist policies drew the ire of the Party's traditionalists[9]. The floating of the dollar, sale of the Commonwealth Bank, and other acts of the Government represented a transformation of the Party from the days of Curtin and Chifley, and accelerated the Party's move to the centre started by Gough Whitlam in the 1970s[10]. Thus many of the Party's traditions were seemingly turned on their head, as Labor transformed itself into a pragmatic, electoral professional, centrist party. Keating's role in this transformation, as both Treasurer and as leader, was of paramount importance[11].

Keating could not have implemented the plethora of reforms which marked his Treasuryship without the electoral success and public popularity that his then leader, Bob Hawke, delivered for the Labor Party at the national level[12]. Indeed Hawke was the ALP's most electorally successful leader ever, winning federal elections in 1983, 1984, 1987 and 1990. The senior and accomplished minister Neal Blewett described Prime Minister Hawke as a charismatic politician with an uncanny attention to bureaucratic process[13]. He was 'corporatist and bureaucratic by instinct and presidential in style'[14], and employed a style of 'broker politics'[15] that served him well. His Government contained many strong and successful ministers, including Keating, and Hawke allowed them to get on with their work without significant interference. He chaired cabinet inclusively

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[8] For a credible analysis of the 1996 federal election consult Clive Bean, et al (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Australian Federal Election* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1997).

[9] See David Day, 'Hawke and the Labor Tradition' in Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective*, (Melbourne, Pluto Press, 2003).

[10] See John Warhurst, 'Transitional Hero: Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 31, no 2, 1996, pp 243-52 and Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992), pp 19-33.

[11] Paul Kelly 1992, op cit.

[12] For a comprehensive analysis of the Hawke years see Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (Melbourne, Pluto Press, 2003). Many contributors to this collection highlight Hawke's electoral success and public popularity.

[13] Neal Blewett, 'Robert James Lee Hawke' in Michelle Grattan (ed) *Australian Prime Ministers* (Sydney, New Holland, 2000), p 390.

[14] Ibid, p 381.

[15] Colin Campbell and John Halligan, *Political Leadership in an Age of Constraint: Bureaucratic Politics Under Hawke and Keating*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992), p 14.

and without excessively stamping a prime ministerial view on his colleagues. Under these circumstances, Treasurer Keating and other ministers flourished[16].

Bob Hawke and Paul Keating can be seen as co-architects of Labor's longest federal reign, but their relationship, initially close and productive, became suspicious, then contemptuous, culminating with open warfare and the leadership battle. Personality differences and the clash of two egos, each convinced of their own leadership virtues and prime ministerial destiny, partly explains the degeneration of the relationship. Their initial success came from a valuable demarcation of roles; Hawke providing the public support which allowed Keating to indulge in his passion for bold policy. The high point of the relationship saw Hawke himself describe the double act as 'the most deadly combination in postwar politics'[17], and Neal Blewett concurred, claiming it was 'one of the great alliances in Australian politics'[18]. That this relationship degenerated is not surprising, Blewett argues, given Keating regarded Hawke as an 'interloper', and Hawke thought his Treasurer an 'opinionated upstart'[19]. The Kirribilli agreement, signed by Hawke and Keating in November 1988, saw Hawke promise to relinquish the leadership in Keating's favour in the parliamentary term following the 1990 election. That Hawke failed to keep his written promise to abdicate was a key reason for the fury with which the subsequent leadership battles were fought. With the announcement on 19 December 1991 that Keating had defeated Hawke by 56 votes to 52 came the formal end of a relationship that had, in reality, ceased to be effective some years prior to the ballot.

Apart from a clash of ambitions, differences in style between the two men are also readily observed. To Hawke speechwriter Stephen Mills:

> The central feature of this combination was the fact that Hawke and Keating were such opposites, in their background, style and character... Hawke was the outsider, unrivalled in the electorate; Keating the insider, the master of Parliament. Hawke was the conciliatory, presidential 'good cop', always

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[16] Paul Kelly 1992, op cit.
[17] Bob Hawke quoted in Neal Blewett 2000, op cit, p 400.
[18] Neal Blewett 2000, op cit, p 401.
[19] Ibid, p 402.

> ready for patient negotiation; Keating was the abrasive, relentless, 'bad cop', willing to drive over the top of any opposition, and throw in a few choice epithets on the way. This is what made them such a deadly combination...[20]

Hawke was the great conciliator, a consensus operator, risk averse, chairman of the cabinet, and immensely popular in the electorate. Keating, on the other hand, was publicly disliked, combative, confrontational, and risk taking, and believed the weight of the Government's success rested on his, rather than Hawke's, shoulders. Hawke was highly educated, a Rhodes scholar, whereas Keating left school at 15 to work in the basement of the Sydney City Council. Keating's spare time was spent cultivating an interest in music and the arts; Hawke's was spent maintaining his obsession with sport. The differences between the two men were stark. The conflict between these colossal figures marked not only the latter stages of the Hawke tenure, but coloured Keating's Prime Ministership after Hawke left the parliament.

Throughout the Hawke and Keating prime ministerships comparisons were inevitably made with the brief tenure of the previous Labor PM, Edward Gough Whitlam, who governed from December 1972 until his dismissal by the Governor-General in November 1975. The Whitlam Government is remembered for implementing its ambitious and wide-ranging social reform agenda, covering women's and indigenous affairs, as well as recognition of China and the reduction in tariff protection for local industries. Not unlike Hawke or Keating, Gough Whitlam was an immensely confident man with self belief befitting a leader. He was bold and authoritarian; an early example of a prime minister who acted 'presidentially'. His 1972 'It's Time' crusade set the standard for modern political campaigning, and saw him take the Prime Ministership from the Conservatives for the first time in 23 years. The Whitlam Government crashed down, however, after a lengthy stand-off in the Senate caused the Governor-General, John Kerr, to dismiss the Prime Minister, forcing him to an election subsequently lost to the Liberal Party's Malcolm Fraser[21].

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[20] Stephen Mills 1993, op cit, p 199.
[21] For a useful and brief biography of Gough Whitlam see Clem Lloyd, 'Edward Gough Whitlam' in Michelle Grattan (ed) *Australian Prime Ministers* (Sydney, New Holland, 2000), p 390. See also

Comparing Labor prime ministers is a difficult task, made even more so by the smallness of their number (ten)[22] and the years that passed between them, for example, 23 years expired between the governments of Chifley and Whitlam. The length of tenure also varies markedly, from the extremes of Forde's one week tenure to Hawke's record breaking 8 years. That Keating's prime ministerial term was four and one quarter years, roughly half that of Hawke's, makes comparisons between the two men more difficult. Similarly with any attempts at a Whitlam – Hawke comparison.

Nonetheless, we can draw lessons from each prime minister's navigation of the constraints of the extra-parliamentary influence and caucus democracy traditionally observed in the Labor Party. In Chifley and Curtin we observe the last of the traditional *primus inter pares* Labor leaders[23]. In Whitlam we see the first authoritarian ALP leader. Hawke offers us an example of a PM utilising cabinet in the traditional, democratic way, while acting in the public sphere like a type of president, appealing directly to the people for personal support in order for Labor's reform agenda to succeed. The Keating tenure, not unlike Whitlam's, represents a controlling approach to the Party and colleagues, without the appeals to electoral popularity observed under Hawke. Each Labor PM made his own mark on the Australian prime ministership, leaving a unique public and historical legacy, and participating in the evolution of the office over a century of political development.

What then, of Paul Keating's public legacy, and how is his prime ministership remembered? He is either loved or loathed by political pundits and the electorate at large, even years after his defeat. Some point to his strong leadership on

Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975* (Melbourne, Viking, 1985); Graham Freudenberg, *A certain grandeur, Gough Whitlam in politics* (South Melbourne, Macmillan, 1977); and James Walter, *The Leader: A Political Biography of Gough Whitlam* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1980).
[22] Watson, Fisher, Hughes, Scullin, Curtin, Forde, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke, and Keating.
[23] See David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney, Harper Collins, 1999) and David Day, *Chifley* (Sydney, Harper Collins, 2001).

important issues such as indigenous affairs, Asian integration and the republic, and his mostly steady stewardship of the nation's economy[24]. Party diehards recall the 'Placido Domingo' and 'true believers' speeches and the dedication of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier as evidence of a thoughtful and forceful statesman, determined to advance his agenda and contribute to the economic and cultural modernisation of Australia.

An apt description of the paradox at the heart of the public Keating comes from factional colossus, cabinet colleague and sometime Keating confidante, Graham Richardson, who described Keating as a 'brawler statesman'[25]. On the one hand was a prime minister who painted with a bold brush, building APEC, offering bold, courageous speeches on foreign policy and signing a defence pact with Indonesia. On the other, a street fighter without equal. As former Senator Richardson told this author in an interview, 'he was good in a fight, there weren't too many who were better. He could fight. If he was one on one giving someone a dressing down he was incredibly brutal. There was no one better at it. I'm not sure you'd want that as your legacy, but it's certainly true'[26].

A former ministerial colleague of both men, Neal Blewett, agrees, describing Keating as 'a bundle of contradictions – to some the prince of darkness, to others the inspired and inspiring leader. Courteous, except when crossed, persuasive, self-deprecatory in private, in public he could be vituperative, abrasive and arrogant. A politician of vision yet a political streetfighter of the cruder kind, he was an autodidact on many topics, with cultivated if narrow interests in music and the arts'[27]. Respected political journalist Paul Kelly described him as a 'born

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[24] Ian McAllister, 'The End of a Labor Era in Australian Politics', *Government and Opposition*, vol 31, no 3, 1996, p 289.
[25] Bob Ellis referred to this description of Paul Keating in his book *Goodbye Jerusalem: Night Thoughts of a Labor Outsider* (Sydney, Vintage, 1997), p 135, the relevant part of which reads: 'the brawler-statesman, as Richo called him, the kid from the fibro suburb in the Armani suit'. Graham Richardson, in an interview conducted by this author on 24 June 2002, confirmed that he had first described Keating as a 'brawler statesman'. This provides the title of this dissertation.
[26] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[27] Neal Blewett, *Cabinet Diaries: A Personal Record of the First Keating Government* (Kent Town, Wakefield Press, 1999), p 16.

political statesman', 'an enthusiast, a talker, a schemer, a manipulator', 'street smart', and 'half hustler, half idealist'[28]. To others he was 'a loner driven by little except self-interest'[29], an egoist with a 'mesmerising arrogance'[30], who used language inappropriate for parliament, shunned important domestic issues, was out of touch, and who as Treasurer gave us the 'recession we had to have', warned of Australia becoming a 'banana republic' and who oversaw one million unemployed as PM.

It has, therefore, become popular to describe Keating as suffering from some form of political schizophrenia. In this way David Adams draws a distinction between those who 'saw in him arrogance, conceit and contemptuousness – even brutality' and those who 'admired the energy, the vision and the rhetorical power'[31]. Michelle Grattan observed 'old and new Labor, street-smart Sydney and the sort of sophistication you'd find in a merchant banker'[32]. Brett Evans argues 'whether tie-less in Bligh Street or sitting for his prime ministerial portrait, Keating is always the same contradiction: visionary street-fighter, inspiring prince, abrasive leader. You don't get one without the other'[33].

Of the published views of the Keating character, perhaps none is more valuable than that from an extremely close confidante who worked for Prime Minister Keating for the entire four and a half years; speechwriter Don Watson. He described Keating as 'an enigma, a paradox, an oxymoron on legs, a contradiction'[34]. The 'Prime Minister was as constant as the moon. He went into shadow and then he would shine'[35]. Keating was 'a cornered rat and a prowling

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[28] Paul Kelly 1992, op cit, p 26.
[29] Peter Ryan, 'The Labor pantheon', *Quadrant*, vol 40, no 6, June 1996, p 88.
[30] Pamela Williams, 'Behind the Victory', *Sydney* Papers, vol 9, no 3, Winter 1997, p 99.
[31] David Adams, 'Prime Ministerial Style' in G Singleton (ed), *The Second Keating Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration 1993-1996* (Canberra, Centre for Research in Public Sector Management/Institute of Public Administration Australia, 1997) p 9.
[32] Michelle Grattan in David Day 2000, op cit, p 416.
[33] Brett Evans, *The Life and Soul of the Party: A Portrait of Modern Labor* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2001) pp 18-19.
[34] Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM* (Sydney, Harper Collins Press, 2002), p 261.
[35] Ibid, p 400.

dog; he was feline; he was a spider skulking in a corner of the web, rushing out every now and then to furiously bind and paralyse his victims'[36].

An experienced journalist described Keating mid-term as 'a political enigma' whose 'political performance fluctuates from peaks of brilliance to troughs of political madness. He is a leader capable of great vision and bravery. But too often his achievements are undermined by his mistakes. Keating believes in the big picture and works at it with great sweeps of the brush. But he often gives too little attention to the smudges and spills which distract the electorate'[37]. Another journalist argued 'Paul Keating is undoubtedly the most complex and paradoxical figure in contemporary Australian politics: at once a skilful party-machine man with the acute political instincts of his working class background, and a leader who can parade the international stage with style and authority; a self-taught man who left school at 15 but who also possesses a formidable knowledge of history, art and music; a ferocious master of vernacular invective yet an orator who can canvass grand themes with flair and emotion'[38].

These reflections on the man who led Australian in the early 1990s are indications of the complexity of Keating and his prime ministership. Whichever side of the Keating persona is emphasised, his tenure is noteworthy for the passion it evokes from both friend and foe. In short, 'Keating's is a complicated legacy – as complicated as the man himself'[39].

Just as complex were Keating's own views on the importance of leadership; Don Watson recalls Keating considering leadership to be unimportant, or 'largely bullshit'[40]. But the views expressed during the Placido Domingo speech extol the virtues of a capable, inspiring and transforming leader. In his own book,

[36] Ibid, p 469.
[37] Geoff Kitney, 'Paul's Sweet Year', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1994, p 30.
[38] Mark Baker, 'The Perils of Paul Keating's Challenge', *Age*, 1 April 1995, p 17.
[39] Brett Evans 2001, op cit, p 20.
[40] Don Watson, op cit, p 238.

Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific[41], he provides what is probably a more accurate description of his approach to power. Keating argued an important responsibility of a prime minister is 'setting the agenda: knowing why you want the job, knowing what to do with it. Above all, it is imagining something better and fashioning the policies to get there'[42]. This approach would not support the negative view of leadership he apparently offered to Watson in what that author has described as just one of many bouts of prime ministerial melancholy.

Keating's view of his own prime ministership was provided to journalist Michael Gordon shortly after the 1996 election defeat. He argued he had achieved as much as was possible, he'd 'used up the political space' and 'tried to make every post a winner'. In this interview Keating somehow equated the prime ministership with a lemon. He continued:

> I tried to use up the authority of the prime minister in a progressive way, and use up the mandate, and one thing about the lemon, when I finally gave it to John Howard, there was no juice left in it. I'd squeezed it all out in the 1993-96 Parliament. Now if the public had given us a new lemon, I'd have done the same again. I wasn't going to say, 'Oh, what a pity we didn't talk about the republic[43].

Clearly Keating saw the prime ministership as something which must be harnessed for change, rather than a role to be filled or time to be served.

This view coincides closely with his view of power; that it is something which must be shaped to suit one's ends and directed towards reform. From Keating's recorded remarks, published views and the transcripts of interviews conducted for this thesis it is impossible to find any account which downplays the Prime Minister's pursuit and enjoyment of power. Indeed, as Watson has well-articulated, 'Keating liked the clash of armies: he was a politician of the older kind, not embarrassed or frightened by power any more than a financier is

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[41] Paul Keating, *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia Pacific* (Sydney, Macmillan, 2000).
[42] Ibid, p 9.
[43] Paul Keating in Michael Gordon, *A True Believer: Paul Keating* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp 342-3.

embarrassed or frightened by money or a dentist by teeth. Power is the currency of politics, the reason for it, the stock in trade. Power was his creative medium. He was never more at home than in its company'[44].

Given this study's preoccupation with power, it is helpful that the man himself often ruminated on its use. In a speech at Melbourne University in 1994 he argued the 'best politicians want power because they know that, for all its imperfections, as a vehicle for turning ideas into reality, a political career has no equal'. He continued: 'the politics of reform is a grinding business, and I confess to wondering sometimes why we do it. I also confess, entirely without apologies, that power has a fair bit to do with it. I never met a good politician who didn't like using it, wrestling with it'[45]. In yet another speech, he argued 'power is for using. It is not to be wasted or feared or despised'[46].

Some have seen in Keating a lust for, and skilful use of, power unequalled in contemporary Australian politics. To Don Watson he was 'a political leader who more than any other in the last quarter century was determined to be master of his environment rather than the opportunist waiting for the times to suit him'[47]. Further, according to the same author, Keating 'practised politics precisely for the purpose of mastering events because politics was the only means by which he could turn this thing of his imagination into something real. Politics was power, it was the hunt, the game, a way to the unrivalled pleasure of destroying his enemies – but it was, as well, always an act of creation'[48]. A Party apparatchik who has worked for more than thirty years for Labor leaders believes Keating's utilisation of his own power resources was more effective than his predecessors Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke[49].

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[44] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 75.
[45] Mark Baker, 'The Power Game Charges Keating', *Age*, 6 August 1994, p 17.
[46] Paul Keating, *Believe in Yourselves*, Speech to the University of Notre Dame graduation ceremony, 8 March 1994, quoted in Mark Ryan 1995, op cit, p 83.
[47] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p xi. An argument can be made that Gough Whitlam was a similar leader, though Watson's remark may refer to the period post-Whitlam.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Private conversation.

The Keating prime ministership is intriguing because of this raw appreciation for power and also due to the distinctive political style that he brought to the position. In his rhetoric, contemptuous treatment of opponents, his distinctive policy interests, and in the observable blend of 'brawler' and 'statesman', Keating offers political scientists a compelling subject of inquiry. Both the man himself and the roller-coaster ride that was the Keating prime ministership throw up significant opportunities for the scholarly analysis of prime ministerial power.

Revisiting Prime Ministerial Power

The debate over prime ministerial power in Westminster systems has been raging at least since the publication of work by Mackintosh and Crossman in Britain in the early 1960s[50], and more recently in contributions from Richard E. Neustadt, George Jones, Richard Rose, Patrick Weller, John Hart, Peter Hennessy, Michael Foley, Anthony Mughan and Ian McAllister[51]. Central to the prime ministerial power debate is the resilience of the traditional Westminster model in the face of modern pressures driving executive government in countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand towards a quasi-presidential leadership model. The debate rests on questions of individual versus collective or cabinet power, and the extent to which the effect of the media and electoral pressures have given rise to the centralisation of influence and authority in the hands of a dominant prime minister.

Recent studies of prime ministerial power come largely out of Britain, where the thesis is well-tested. Peter Hennessy, a noted scholar of Whitehall and Downing Street, as well as Michael Foley and Anthony Mughan, have all made substantial contributions to the debate in the last half-decade. Hennessy analyses British

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[50] John P Mackintosh 1968, op cit; RHS Crossman 1963, op cit.
[51] See Richard E Neustadt 1985, op cit; George Jones 1991, op cit; Richard Rose 1982, op cit; Patrick Weller 1985, op cit; John Hart 1991, op cit; Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit; Peter Hennessy 1999, op cit; Michael Foley 1993 and 2000, op cit; Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit; Ian McAllister 2004/forthcoming, op cit.

Prime Ministers since 1945 through the prism of a job description he has compiled. The chapter on the incumbent PM, Tony Blair, paints the picture of a colossally dominant leader governing from the centre of government. Hennessy describes a situation where the enormous and increasing responsibilities of the office have 'stretched' the premiership in the years since World War Two.

Michael Foley also centres his analysis of the British Prime Ministership on a notion of 'leadership stretch'. His publication *The British Presidency* (2000) examines prime ministerial influence and authority in the context of the Thatcher, Major and, in much more detail, Blair prime ministerships. Along the way Foley identifies an Americanisation of the British prime minister. Though without the institutional power structures available to the President of the United States, Foley argues, the British prime ministership under Blair has become presidential in nature because of the centralisation of power in the hands of the PM. This accumulation of authority and influence has been facilitated by the adaptation of American techniques, such as 'going public', in response to the pressures of modern executive governance.

Anthony Mughan is another British contributor who stresses the changing nature of the Prime Ministership and, in particular, the phenomenon of individualisation. Mughan analyses the personalisation of election campaigns and concludes that there has been a 'presidentialisation' of print and television campaign coverage since World War Two, and that candidates for the prime ministership, that is the leaders of the Labour and Conservative parties in Britain, play a greater role in the decisions made by the electorate. The personalisation of presentation, and the central role of leaders in political campaigns, concludes Mughan, allows them to exercise greater power over their colleagues, for example in the appointment and dismissal of cabinet ministers.

In an Australian context, Patrick Weller's *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power* remains the most comprehensive contribution to the debate[52]. It takes a more conservative approach to the subject than the British contributions introduced above, but it was written a decade earlier, before the Paul Keating and John Howard prime ministerships. Weller asks 'how powerful was Malcolm Fraser and how real was the institution of cabinet government while he was prime minister?'[53]. Drawing on interviews, the public record, and personal papers and correspondence, Weller examines the Fraser Prime Ministership of 1975 – 1983 and analyses the personal and institutional relationships between Fraser and his sources of advice, the parliament, media, other ministers, the cabinet and his party. In the process, Weller provides a 'portrait of the prime minister in action' and a 'study in the exercise of power and influence within the Australian political system'[54].

Malcolm Fraser PM draws on the experience of one prime ministership to provide insights into many of the questions central to the debate over prime ministerial power. Weller asks how Fraser 'organised the position, from whom he got advice and what use he made of it, how he ran the cabinet and the party, and how he presented the government through the parliament, the media and at elections'. Then, more broadly, he asks: 'how do prime ministers have an impact on the procedures and policies of a government?' and 'what does an appreciation of the working styles of, and limitations on, prime ministers tell us more generally about the difficulties of governing Australia?'[55]. Weller's *Malcolm Fraser PM* analyses one prime minister and the interactions between the leader and the institutional power centres of the Australian system of executive government, in the process emphasising the style and skills which allowed Prime Minister Fraser to navigate the constraints inherent to the position.

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[52] Patrick Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power in Australia* (Melbourne, Penguin, 1989).
[53] Ibid, p xiii.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

The conclusions of *Malcolm Fraser PM* can be summarised thus: first, though there is scope for individual decision making, cabinet must be consulted if a prime minister is to retain the support of his or her senior colleagues. Second, cabinet is neither individualistic nor collective, but requires navigation and a strategic determination of where decisions will be made and by whom. Third, power in the Australian system is dispersed widely between parties, state governments, the media, interest groups and the electorate. Fourth, individual prime ministerial style and skill is important as it determines the extent to which the leader can persuade and manipulate. Finally, Weller argues, the 'fact that so powerful a leader saw the necessity to consult so often is a comment not just on the individual, but on the Australian political system'[56].

The thesis that follows is best seen as a re-examination of the prime ministerial power debate, begun by Mackintosh and Crossman and still conducted to the present day by contributors such as Hennessy, Foley, Mughan and Weller, among others. It relies, in particular, on the institutional approach provided by Weller in his Australian study, but draws heavily from the example set by the British prime ministerial scholars. The objective is to provide a more recent analysis of the Australian prime minister while taking into account the large academic strides that have been made internationally, most notably in the United Kingdom. A comprehensive examination of these works is undertaken in the literature review, provided in Chapter Two. There a detailed analysis of executive leadership, the Westminster prime ministership, the role of the Australian PM, and the influence of personality and style is conducted within the parameters of the debate over prime ministerial power.

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[56] Ibid, pp 408-9.

Methodology and Sources

This thesis relies on an interactionist model of leadership developed by Robert Elgie[57]. Elgie's approach emphasises the key relationships of leadership, between leaders and followers and, also, between the prime minister and the key institutional actors and alternative centres of power which she or he must work with and through. In his words, the interactionist approach 'combines the personal and systemic aspects of the leadership process' and marries the 'great man' theory of leadership, where individuals are able to effect widespread change, and the cultural determinist school which asserts leaders represent the powerful forces of history and the context of the times[58]. The emphasis is therefore on the leadership environment, so that

> the extent to which political leaders are able to influence the decision-making process is considered to be contingent upon the interaction between the leader and the leadership environment in which the leader operates. How political leadership is exercised depends on the nature of this interaction[59].

Further, in a similar vein, 'leadership is intimately related to the fabric of the leaders' relevant societies, to social and political organizations, to established institutions, and to leaders' relations with smaller and larger groups of followers'[60].

Leaders must therefore navigate the institutional structures of the political system, including parliaments, parties, bureaucracies, cabinet and the media. Convincingly, Elgie argues these 'structures are the most important aspect of the leadership process, partly determining the ambitions and styles of political leaders and mediating the impact of societal needs upon the decision-making process'[61].

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[57] Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (London, Macmillan, 1995).
[58] Ibid, pp 5-6.
[59] Ibid, p 7.
[60] Sheffer in ibid, p 7.
[61] Ibid, p 13.

The continuing debate about the relative power of presidents and prime ministers vis-à-vis institutions and competing centres of influence rests on the premise of important institutional and personal relationships impacting on the leadership task. The exercise of prime ministerial power necessarily involves others, which means it invites analysis of *relationships*. In Weller's words, 'power suggests a relationship'; 'resources and relationships must be at the centre of any discussion of prime ministerial power'[62]. This dissertation follows suit by analysing the Paul Keating prime ministership in Australia in the context of institutional interaction, allowing for the interplay of personality and the leadership environment.

The thesis relies on a combination of eight major groups of sources. The first group comprises the literature dealing with prime ministerial power and the debate about the centralisation of influence and authority in Westminster systems. This literature is mentioned briefly above, and is made up of work from prime ministerial and presidential scholars from the Westminster world and the United States. In addition to this body of work, important studies of leadership and the interactions of leaders and their environments and constituencies will also be consulted. To round out the secondary literature, analyses of party leadership and the institutions of executive government will also be consulted. In the process, the theoretical and academic foundations of the study can be isolated and, subsequently, applied to the experiences of the early to mid 1990s in Australia.

Biographical material provides another important insight into the Paul Keating prime ministership. In this domain the Keating scholar is blessed with more than one well-written account, coming from commentators[63], colleagues[64] and

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[62] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 12.

[63] See for example Michael Gordon 1996, op cit; David Day 2000, op cit; Edna Carew, *Paul Keating: Prime Minister* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992)..

[64] Consult Peter Walsh, *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* (Sydney, Random House, 1995) and Graham Richardson, *Whatever It Takes* (Sydney, Bantam Books, 1994) for some colourful accounts of the Keating Prime Ministership.

participants[65] alike. Of these biographical works Don Watson's *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart* is without equal and will stand as one of the most substantial contributions to prime ministerial biography. John Edwards' *Keating: The Inside Story* and Michael Gordon's *A True Believer: Paul Keating* also provide valuable accounts. These rich sources are supplemented by other published work, including Pamela William's 1997 analysis of Keating's last election campaign[66], David Day's short biography[67], and Gwynneth Singleton's collection of essays on Keating's second term[68]. These accounts, specific to Keating and the government he led, assist in the telling of the Keating story, provide important indications of the key players in the Government, and fill in the gaps where other sources may have failed to paint a more complete picture.

The third group of sources comprises official documents and the record of the Government from 1991 to 1996, detailing, for example, Prime Minister Keating's trips overseas, and the make-up of the cabinet, caucus, and committees. This material includes the *Cabinet Handbook* published in 1994, Annual Reports of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and other like sources. This material serves the useful purpose of supplementing other material and clarifying remarks made in interviews. It adds a factual and objective set of material to the other information gathered for the thesis.

The fourth source of research for this thesis was the official record of parliament provided by *Hansard*. The parliamentary activity spanning the entirety of Keating's term was analysed in order to gain an appreciation for the Prime Minister's strategies and debating style, his treatment of the Opposition, and the rhetoric he used to inspire those on his own side of the House of Representatives. An examination of his favourite parliamentary topics and his

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[65] John Edward's *Keating: The Inside Story* (Melbourne, Penguin, 1996) provides a view from one of the Prime Minister's advisers.
[66] Pamela Williams, *The Victory: The Inside Story of the Takeover of Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1997).
[67] David Day 2000, op cit.
[68] Gwynneth Singleton, *The Second Keating Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration 1993-1996* (Canberra, Centre for Research in Public Sector Management, 1997).

responses to Questions Without Notice is also undertaken, in order to explore Keating's parliamentary persona.

For similar reasons Keating's public speeches on a diverse range of topics are consulted. In this the Keating researcher is greatly assisted by the collection of speeches compiled by former prime ministerial adviser, Mark Ryan[69]. When taken together, Keating's rhetoric in parliament and in the wider public domain provide important insights into Keating as prime minister, and his performance as the Government's chief advocate.

Published media commentary provides the sixth major group of sources consulted extensively in the research for this thesis. In particular, reports and analysis from credible, widely-circulating publications such as the *Australian*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age*, the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Sun Herald* daily newspapers are used[70]. This provides chronological records of the events of the Keating Government as well as expert commentary on the operation of the Government, snapshots of Keating's leadership style and an indication of the reactions to significant initiatives, proposals and speeches. This material is also useful when determining Keating and his advisers' media strategies, and the relations between the Government and the media.

The seventh group of sources is made up of opinion polling, the *Australian Election Studies*, and analyses of the 1993 and 1996 federal elections. This material provides insights into the electorate's perceptions of Prime Minister Keating, and sheds some light on his fraught relationship with the Australian people. An analysis of the election campaigns fought by Keating as PM is also made possible by the availability of this material, from which we can draw broader conclusions about the public and electoral aspects of his tenure.

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[69] Mark Ryan 1995, op cit.
[70] These were selected on the basis of readership, geographical coverage, and varying format.

Finally, the most useful data utilised in this dissertation on the Keating prime ministership was obtained from many interviews with Keating's caucus and ministerial colleagues, members of the Press Gallery, advisers, bureaucrats, party officials and other interested participants[71]. The utilisation of the interactionist model demanded this. Paul Keating was also interviewed for three hours in Sydney, but his request that this conversation not be referred to in the body of the thesis has been honoured, perhaps at some unavoidable cost to the argument. Much effort was made to speak with as many other key players as possible. When taken together with the published sources and public record, the insights provided by those interviewed allow a wide-ranging study of the Keating prime ministership, its personalities, power relationships and institutional interactions.

Outlines, Aims and Arguments

This dissertation draws upon evidence from the Paul Keating prime ministership of December 1991 to March 1996 to test the prime ministerial power thesis. Relying on a framework supplied by earlier contributors to the debate, it will provide some insights into the authority, influence and power resources available to Keating as he occupied the nation's highest elected office. The aim of the dissertation, therefore, is to isolate the power relationships central to the governing task and to draw some conclusions about the levers of power available to Keating specifically and then, more broadly, to Australian prime ministers in general. Additionally, useful judgements can be made about the extent to which the power resources available to prime ministers have changed, and the extent to which personal style and the strategies of leaders can account for differences in the influence and authority enjoyed by occupants of the office.

With these objectives in mind, a number of key questions can then be isolated. What are the boundaries of the debate over prime ministerial power? To what

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[71] A complete list of the interviews conducted is provided at the end of this thesis.

extent does the prime ministerial power thesis accurately describe the centralisation of authority and influence in the hands of prime ministers? What influence do institutions, constituencies and competing power centres have on the prime ministership? How does the Keating experience challenge or support the prime ministerial government thesis? What are the tasks of party leadership and what were the relationships between Paul Keating, the Labor caucus, party organisation and the affiliated unions? How did Keating interact with his cabinet and the wider ministry? What was his parliamentary style and in what ways did he use parliament to his own advantage? From where did Keating get his advice, and what were the respective roles of his private office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet? How did Keating use rhetoric and the media to paint his 'big picture' and how did he perform at election time? What is the potential and actual impact of the removal mechanisms wielded by the electorate and a prime minister's colleagues? Once these questions have been answered valuable insights can then be gained into the nature of the Australian prime ministership, the impact of individual style, and the ways in which the office has grown to accommodate a dominant prime minister with the will, the ability, and the support, to dominate Australian governance.

To address these questions the dissertation is presented in the next eight chapters. Chapter Two comprises a review of the prime ministerial power literature and the leadership material more generally. Here the focus is on the differing arguments of key contributors to the debate and the varying emphases on collective or cabinet authority, or constraints, versus individual influence and authority. In particular, the findings and conclusions of *Malcolm Fraser PM*, Foley's *British Presidency*, Hennessy's *The Prime Minister*, and Mughan's *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections* will be examined in more detail in order to provide a basis for a worthwhile study of prime ministerial leadership under Paul Keating. In addition, the literature that deals with the tasks of leadership, including party leadership, and the constituencies which leaders must navigate will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will address notions of prime ministerial style and the impact this has on the governing task. By

providing a coherent discussion of the secondary literature that deals with prime ministerial power and the demands and influences placed on leaders it is hoped that a useful platform for subsequent chapters' analysis of the Keating prime ministership can be built.

Chapter Three begins the Keating-specific analysis with a detailed examination of his role as party leader. Here the tasks of party leadership are isolated in relation to the prime minister's interactions with his caucus colleagues, the Australian Labor Party organisation, and the unions. This involves the study of the access to Keating that members, senators and Party officials enjoyed, the conduct of caucus and other party meetings, Keating's relations with the Party's National Secretariat and with union leaders. As a result of numerous interviews with members of parliament, Labor identities and advisers, a view of Keating's distinctive brand of party leadership and the important relations between the prime minister and his Party is provided. This, in turn, will shed light on the power and influence enjoyed by Keating as Labor leader, and will serve as the first substantive component of this unique examination of the prime ministerial power thesis.

Next, Paul Keating's relations with his senior colleagues – the cabinet and the wider ministry – will be analysed in Chapter Four. In this area the prime minister again has many roles and relationships. Keating was expected to chair and oversee the administration of cabinet, appoint ministers elected by the caucus (though with significant prime ministerial input) to specific portfolios, and handle reshuffles and resignations. All of this takes place among numerous ambitious individuals with their own significant power bases and with only a caucus ballot standing between them and Keating's job. Typically, this creates a need for the careful management of personalities, and some degree of consultation with other powerful figures. In this respect, the prime ministerial power thesis is well-tested. Central to the traditional model of Westminster government are notions of

collective, cabinet government with the prime minister as *primus inter pares*[72]. The extent to which the Keating tenure deviated from this ideal model is ascertained.

The administrative and political support on which Paul Keating relied throughout his prime ministership is the focus of Chapter Five. Here, the sources of advice provided by his own private office, staffed by political operatives, policy advisers, speech writers and other staff, as well as the bureaucracy - principally the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) - are examined. In the first instance, Keating's relations with key personnel in his private office, the degrees of trust he bestowed on individuals, the functions and processes of the private office, and the interaction and access between the prime minister and staff, and the prime minister's staff and others, are all examined in an attempt to determine the extent to which Keating governed 'from the centre', coordinating the gamut of the Government's activities from the Prime Minister's Office and relying on a trusted band of close advisers. The second component of this chapter is an analysis of the relationship between Keating and PM&C, the structures and services of the Department, the demands placed on it by the Prime Minister, and the demarcation of roles in relation to the PMO. The relationship between the alternative sources of advice and their competition for prime ministerial influence is another worthwhile subject of inquiry. Throughout the chapter, then, prime ministerial power is analysed in the context of the accumulation of sources of advice which allow for the subsequent garnering of authority and influence in the Office of the Prime Minister. A related concern, also addressed in this chapter, is the extent to which Australian federalism and the constraining influence of state governments impedes the prime minister[73].

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[72] *Primus inter pares* (first among equals) describes a model of collective leadership that arguably, in the context of Westminster prime ministers, has not ever existed. It remains useful, however, as a shorthand way of describing an ideal form of *cabinet* government, with which comparisons with *prime ministerial* government can be made.

73 Unfortunately the space available in Chapter Five, and this thesis' concentration on national politics, only allows for a brief analysis of the impact of federalism, though there is scope for a much broader study of state governments as alternative sources of power in a federal system.

Many of the more compelling moments in the Paul Keating prime ministership occurred in the House of Representatives. As Prime Minister, Keating continued the dominance of the parliament that he established as Treasurer, along the way destroying two leaders of the opposition – John Hewson and Alexander Downer[74] – and rallying his own side with his spirited invective and passionate advocacy. But there was a down side. Chapter Six deals explicitly with Keating in parliament, and analyses the language and strategies employed by the Prime Minister, what he sought to use parliament for, how his treatment of the opposition provides insights into his political style, and what impact parliamentary dominance and the rigours of combat had on his stores of prime ministerial power.

Paul Keating has been both maligned and admired for his articulation of a 'big picture', extending from economic reform and Australian competitiveness to integration with Asia, an Australian republic, and indigenous affairs. But how did he 'paint' this big picture? Chapter Seven deals with Keating as a political advocate, salesman or statesman. It addresses in detail his media strategies and relationships with the 'fourth estate', and his speech making style, effectiveness and favourite topics. The analysis of these public aspects of Keating's prime ministerial task also sheds light on the relations with individual journalists, the importance attached to speeches, international statesmanship, and the strategies utilised by Keating in his capacity as the artist chiefly responsible for the big picture[75].

The broadest domestic constituency a Prime Minister must appeal to is the voting public. Chapter Eight deals exclusively with public opinion and election campaigns and, in the process, sheds light on the least favoured of Keating's prime ministerial tasks and those that he, it could be argued, performed the least

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[74] Though it could be argued that Downer's leadership was so poor that he destroyed himself, with some help from the Prime Minister.
[75] Again, as with the earlier note about federalism, the section on international relations deals relatively briefly with this domain because of consideration of available space and the concentration on national, largely domestic, politics.

effectively. In this chapter his relations with the wider electorate illustrated by opinion polling, election outcomes and campaigning style are examined in order to determine the extent to which prime ministerial power is drawn primarily from the people, and to draw out the lessons from the tenure of an unpopular prime minister.

Finally, the broader insights gained from this study into the Paul Keating Prime Ministership are drawn out and discussed in Chapter Nine. Judgements of Keating's leadership provided by those interviewed, and observations of the positive and negative aspects of the Keating style are made, and the effects determined. More broadly, how this prime ministership sits within the prime ministerial power thesis is discussed. Comparisons can be made with the conclusions reached by Patrick Weller in *Malcolm Fraser PM* about the nature of prime ministerial power in Australia, and broader judgements made about the relevance of the international literature. Most importantly, the effect of a decade of evolution of Australian governmental institutions and the impact of distinct personal leadership styles can be determined. Building on this analysis, some useful conclusions about the nature of Australian prime ministerial leadership are then drawn.

The picture that emerges from the following study of Paul Keating, Australian Prime Minister from December 1991 to March 1996, is of a leader who dominated his caucus and cabinet. He isolated himself, governed from the centre, and relied on the advice of a small, handpicked coterie of key advisers and confidantes. His supremacy over colleagues was partially the result of his forceful style and the effects of the unexpected victory he engineered in the 1993 election, but the major reason for his dominance was the subservience of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and the cabinet and their willingness to let the Prime Minister have his way.

The electorate's relationship with the PM, however, was less tolerant and more fraught with pitfalls. That the Keating Prime Ministership was terminated by an

unimpressed electorate is, of itself, an important lesson in prime ministerial power. Observations of the Keating tenure demonstrate that there is much scope for prime ministerial power waiting to be utilised by a talented, dominant leader. This means they can be authoritative and powerful, but only within the constraints imposed by the prospect of the withdrawal of party room support or the reality of electoral defeat. Australian prime ministers are only as powerful as they are allowed to be; by their colleagues and by the electorate. Paul Keating was an immensely powerful leader who dominated colleagues but could not resist the final judgement of the Australian people.

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Prime Ministerial Leadership

> The image of prime ministers is one of great power. That picture is true if the individual has the powers of persuasion, the skills of manipulation, the vision to direct, the ambition to drive and the energy to work[76].

Any worthwhile examination of prime ministerial leadership, and of political leadership more broadly, must take into account the important relationships between leaders and followers most accurately portrayed by the interactionist model introduced in Chapter One. Leadership is exercised when persons 'mobilise, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers'[77]. It 'is the process by which one individual consistently exerts more impact than others on the nature and direction of group activity'[78] and 'an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes'[79]. A situation exists where a 'leader's legitimacy depends on his or her standing with followers'[80]. For prime ministers, 'followers' and other important groups of influential actors are located in institutions such as the political party, cabinet, caucus, parliament and the bureaucracy, and also in a broader sense in the electorate itself. Successful leadership thus requires the careful cultivation of these groups and followers in an atmosphere of institutional and political constraint.

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[76] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 409.

[77] James Macgregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York, Harper and Row, 1978 [see also reprint, 1979]), p18.

[78] B Kellerman, 'Leadership as a Political Act' in B Kellerman (ed), *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1984), p 70.

[79] JC Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Praeger, 1991), p 102.

[80] EP Hollander, 'Legitimacy, Power and Influence: A Perspective on Relational Features of Leadership' in MM Chemers and R Ayman (eds), *Leadership Theory and Research* (London, Academic Press, 1993), p 31.

The task at hand for political leaders is multi-dimensional and difficult. They must consider a multitude of factors, including both electoral appeal and good governance, two notions which are not always compatible. According to Gardner's idealistic list, leaders are responsible for: envisioning goals; affirming and regenerating values; motivating; managing; achieving workable unity; gaining trust; explaining; serving as a symbol; representing the group; and renewing agendas and objectives[81]. Leaders must balance each of these important tasks in order to maintain the support of the group and of the wider constituency to which that group appeals.

Much of the existing body of theoretical leadership literature largely stresses simplified typologies of leaders and the impact of factors such as historical circumstance, contexts, opportunity structures, ambition and luck, on the careers of leading political figures. In the first group of studies, emphasising leader types, we hear of strong versus weak[82], democratic versus authoritarian[83], mobilising and expressive[84], transformational and transactional[85], charismatic[86], active-positive, active-negative, passive-positive and passive-negative leaders[87]. Indeed it would appear that there are almost as many leadership types as there are political leaders.

Another school conceptualises leadership in relation to a diversity of influences that impinge on the tasks of leadership and factors affecting the rise of individuals to high office. In this respect, some scholars have attempted to

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[81] JW Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York, Free Press, 1990), pp 11-22.
[82] Graham Little, *Strong Leadership: Thatcher, Reagan and An Eminent Person* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988).
[83] Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies* (London, Macmillan, 1995), p 11.
[84] D Kavanagh, *Politics and Personalities* (London, Macmillan, 1990), p 247.
[85] James Macgregor Burns 1978, op cit; EP Hollander 1993, op cit; BM Bass and BJ Avolio, 'Transformational Leadership: A Response to Critiques' in MM Chemers and R Ayman (eds), *Leadership Theory and Research* (London, Academic Press, 1993).
[86] MR Lepsius, 'Charismatic Leadership: Max Weber's Model and its Applicability to the Rule of Hitler' in CF Graumann and S Moscovici (eds), *Changing Conceptions of Leadership* (New York, Springer-Verlag, 1986); K Klenke, 'Contemporary Leadership Theories: The Conceptual Thicket' in *Woman and Leadership: A Contextual Perspective* (New York, Springer Publishing Company, 1996).

attach importance to inborn personal traits such as height, aggression, intelligence or energy[88]. Others have analysed the role of ambition, attributed to countless psychological factors and environmental stimuli[89]. In this they are joined by Niccolo Machiavelli, whose classic contribution *The Prince* stresses the importance of equal doses of both *virtu*[90] and fortune[91]. Burns introduces notions of opportunity structures which impact on the ability of potential leaders to rise in the political world[92]. Yet another approach highlights historical circumstance and the leadership skills required under various situations[93].

It is a daunting task to navigate the myriad theoretical constructs presented by a vast, but inconsistent, body of leadership literature, and a detailed analysis of that work is not attempted here. Instead, to assist with this analysis of prime ministerial leadership, an alternative to typological, psychological and historical/situational approaches is taken. This study's 'interactionist' approach mirrors Elgie's, introduced in Chapter One. This emphasises the key relationships of leadership, between leaders and followers and, also, between the prime minister and the key institutional actors and alternative centres of power which she or he must work with and through.

The interactionist model of political leadership as developed by Elgie isolates three ways in which institutions impact on the leadership task. First, leadership is affected by the structure of resources within the executive branch of government, such as the mechanisms for determining how leaders are elected or selected to occupy the highest office, and through the distribution of constitutional and

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[87] JD Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1992).
[88] See K Klenke 1996, op cit, pp 57-62 for a useful summary and discussion of the work of trait theory scholars such as Maslow, Dubin and Mann.
[89] JM Burns 1978, op cit; SA Renshon, *High Hopes: The Clinton Presidency and the Politics of Ambition* (New York, New York University Press, 1996).
[90] *Virtu* refers to the qualities of a leader, one of which is ambition.
[91] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Reference, 1993 [1513]); see also SJ Walker, *The Discourses of Niccolo Machiavelli* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p 101.
[92] James Macgregor Burns 1978, op cit, p 120.
[93] JW Gardner 1990, op cit, p 38.

procedural authority, including the constraints placed on leaders' authority by dispersed institutions or formal rules limiting power. Second, the structure of, and interaction between, the executive branch of the central government and other jurisdictions or branches of the state impacts on the leadership environment. This involves the separation of powers inherent in liberal democratic polities, the relationship between legislative, judicial and executive arms of government, the extent to which federalism affects the powers available to leaders, and the authority granted to each branch of the state. Finally, in Elgie's estimation, relational leadership is affected by the structure of resources within and between political parties, their organisational structures, levels of popular support and the relative power of the party to select or dismiss leaders[94].

The interactionist approach, though not specifically attributed, informs much of the system-specific and comparative literature on executive leadership in the polities of Washington and the Westminster world. The continuing debate about the relative power of presidents and prime ministers vis-à-vis institutions and competing centres of influence rests on the premise of important institutional and personal relationships impacting on the leadership task. This dissertation follows suit by analysing the Paul Keating prime ministership in Australia in the context of institutional interaction, allowing for the interplay of personality and the leadership environment. First, though, a thorough discussion of the prime ministership and the debate over the concept of prime ministerial government is required.

The Prime Ministership

Following Westminster conventions, the Australian prime minister is simultaneously the leader of the parliament's majority party, chair of cabinet and chief spokesperson for the government of the day. Though the office is not even

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[94] Robert Elgie 1995, op cit, pp 15-20.

mentioned in the Australian Constitution – much is expected of the prime minister:

> They are national leaders, policy initiators, chairpersons of cabinet, leaders of parties, media figures, parliamentarians, electoral campaigners and administrative co-ordinators ... The diverse roles eventually are integrated into one: the position of prime minister. All of them have to be fulfilled, to a greater or lesser extent, at the same time.[95].

Prime ministerial leadership requires a leader with the capacity to perform many roles while maintaining their ascendency in relation to colleagues, the official opposition, the media, and the electorate at large[96]. This is what led one authoritative commentator to equate the load on a prime minister with mercury because 'it shifts but is always heavy'[97].

Descriptive lists such as the above are common. They detail either the tasks expected of the PM or the prerequisites for the job. One amusing attempt at the latter came from former Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, who remarked that 'a prime minister needed a hide like a rhinoceros, an overpowering ambition and a mighty conceit of himself'[98]. The more serious attempts at providing a job description have been provided by Patrick Weller (see above) in Australia, and by Britain's Peter Hennessy (below). Colin Seymour-Ure has also produced a useful description, which includes formal and informal, institutional and personal, and governing and non-governing roles[99].

Hennessy's detailed list of prime ministerial tasks is comprehensive, and well-illustrates the depth and breadth of leadership in Westminster polities. He provides seven major groups of tasks[100]. The first group encompasses the constitutional and procedural aspects of the role, including maintenance of the relationship between the government and the head of state, the opposition, and

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[95] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 395.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, p 551.
[98] Anne Henderson, 'Joseph Aloysius Lyons' in Michelle Grattan (ed), *Australian Prime Ministers*, (Sydney, New Holland, 2000) p 156.
[99] Colin Seymour-Ure, *Prime Ministers and the Media: Issues of Power and Control*, (Melbourne, Blackwell, 2003), p 15.

the civil service. The second and third groups of tasks include the making of crown and other public appointments, including the appointment of ministers to portfolios, ministerial dismissal, and other appointments to key military, judicial and public sector posts. The fourth group of prime ministerial tasks outlined by Hennessy is the conduct of cabinet and parliamentary business. Fifth, prime ministers are responsible for the organisation and staffing of the cabinet office and their own advisory structures. They are also called upon to make budget and market sensitive economic decisions and, finally, to take on primary responsibility for foreign and defence relationships.

Patrick Weller offers another simplified and more politically-oriented list, in the process arguing prime ministers are responsible for managing the administrative and political processes, and for control of party policy[101]. In this context, he distinguishes between

> the roles that prime ministers *must, should* and *choose to* play. They *must* chair cabinet, prevent fragmentation, arbitrate; fight fires; meet media and international demands. They *should* be guardian of the strategy; focus priorities. They *choose to* run individual policy areas; keep control of/an eye on individual policies. Each category concerns political, policy and administrative problems[102].

More specifically,

> by convention prime ministers chair cabinet and select ministers. By parliamentary practice, they answer for the general performance of their government and their personal behaviour to the House of Representatives. By choice they may dominate the party's electoral campaigning, respond to the media and play a significant role in foreign affairs. How much time they spend on the different activities depends on their own priorities and on the political circumstances[103].

In the conduct of these roles, 'they sit at the centre of a political maelstrom, blown by forces they cannot entirely control, and calculate how best to use their limited capacities and resources'[104].

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[100] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, pp 60-90.
[101] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, pp 363-4.
[102] Ibid, p 207.
[103] Patrick Weller, 'The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992), p 204.
[104] Ibid, p 205.

Prime ministerial leadership inevitably involves relationships with other domains, each with their own sources of legitimacy and authority, and their own significant power bases bestowed by convention, constitution, popular will or by the competitive pressures fuelled by electoral competition and representative government. This is the lesson articulated by Elgie. The prime ministerial government literature stresses the centralisation of power, but with some important institutional and relational limits that prevent the full personalisation of authority in the hands of Westminster[105] leaders. In this respect, important power relationships exist between prime ministers and: cabinet, both as an institution and as a collection of powerful and ambitious colleagues and rivals; caucus, with the need for continued party support; parliament; the media and the electorate; and the bureaucratic and political sources of advice available to leaders. These institutions comprise the prime ministerial leadership environment.

Cabinet is the focal point of traditional conceptions of Westminster executive government, and much can be learned from the power relations flowing both ways between ministers and the leader. Cabinet's role is best described as a decision-making body, relying on collective effort, directed by the prime minister. Its task is to

> manage the unmanageable, routinise the extraordinary, systemise the disorderly, and co-ordinate the incoherent. Its agenda includes matters of detail too gritty to be dealt with elsewhere, and matters that appear retrospectively insignificant but were perceived to be politically sensitive at the time[106].

The prime minister's influence on, and control over, the collective decision-making process central to cabinet's role is contentious. Recent analyses of cabinet argue power is skewed in favour of the prime minister because of their

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[105] The term 'Westminster' is used here, and throughout the thesis, to describe political systems which are derived from the Westminster system of Britain. This allows for the inclusion of the Australian political system which is, of course, federalist in nature while retaining many of the characteristics of British political institutions.
[106] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 105.

control over the administration and running of cabinet[107], the need for coordination of policy which cuts across portfolios, and the growth and sophistication of advisory structures which ensure prime ministers are the best informed member of the government[108]. Peter Hennessy writes that a leader can 'easily be tempted to steer in advance the result of a meeting' by deciding which ministers are involved in a decision, or indeed whether an issue is placed on the agenda at all[109]. More specifically,

> Prime ministers set the agenda for cabinet meetings, decide which ministers will be cabinet members and determine what cabinet committees will be formed and what their authority will be. They chair the meetings of cabinet and their summary of discussions becomes the basis of the formal decisions ... They shape the content and tone of debate in cabinet and provide the means by which prime ministers can determine the directions in which the government intends to go[110].

With these tools at the prime minister's disposal, it is tempting to conclude that they have sufficient power to tightly control the operation and outcomes of cabinet. However, while the 'rolling' of a prime minister may be a rare occurrence, much depends on the personality of the prime minister and the extent to which he or she is allowed to dominate proceedings by compliant ministers. Thus, while cabinet may restrain a prime minister, 'the advantages of controlling the system are considerable'[111]. The relationships between the prime minister and cabinet, both institutionally and in personal dealings with individual ministers, are all important. The potential for dominance exists for a prime minister willing and able to draw upon the substantial power resources that cabinet control presents.

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[107] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit; Patrick Weller, 'Prime Ministers, Political Leadership and Cabinet Government', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 1991, vol 50, no 2, pp 131-44; Patrick Weller, Support for Prime Ministers: A Comparative Perspective' in C Campbell and MJ Wyszomirski (eds), *Executive Leadership in Anglo-American Systems* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991)
[108] Michael Keating and Patrick Weller, 'Cabinet Government: an institution under pressure' in Michael Keating, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (eds), *Institutions on the Edge? Capacity for Governance*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2000), pp 57-63.
[109] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, p 79.
[110] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 104.
[111] Patrick Weller 1991, 'Support for Prime Ministers: A Comparative Perspective', op cit, p 370.

A wider circle of supporters, critics, rivals and judges of prime ministerial performance comprise caucus; a body of parliamentarians from the prime minister's own party which meets formally at regular intervals but whose informal influence stretches far beyond participation in caucus discussions[112]. Of vital importance to the leader is the caucus' ability to essentially hire and fire prime ministers. While party rules differ on the selection of leaders between parties and political systems[113], in all cases caucus plays a role. As such, relationships between leaders and the immediate followers comprising the caucus become a vital determinant of survival, making the caucus of primary value to a prime minister intent on retaining power. Leaders trade the prospect of electoral success for continued support in the party room. In this sense, the relationship is one of exchange, where 'leaders may lead only as long as they deliver'[114]. This is the basis of the 'leadership bargain' expounded by Glyn Davis[115], in which the consequences for an under-performing leader may be politically fatal.

The restrictive influence of the parliamentary party on leaders is counteracted by important powers of patronage, and other devices available to prime ministers in the maintenance of leadership support. Weller argues leaders 'have considerable political resources that can bolster their position'[116], making removal from office a difficult proposition. Primary among the resources available to prime ministers is the power of patronage. For this reason, Hennessy argues that the appointment and dismissal of ministers is 'the true locus of prime

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[112] See Glyn Davis, 'Prime Ministers and Parties' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992); John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, 'Introduction' in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre, *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001).

[113] Consult L LeDuc, 'Democratizing Party Leadership Selection', *Party Politics*, vol 7, no 3, 2001, pp 323-41; Patrick Weller, 'Party Rules and the Dismissal of Prime Ministers: Comparative Perspectives from Britain, Canada and Australia', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol 47, no 1, 1994, pp 133-44.

[114] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 45.

[115] See Glyn Davis 1992, op cit; Glyn Davis 2002, op cit; see also Chapter Three, below, for a more thorough discussion of the leadership bargain.

[116] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 45.

ministerial primacy in terms of the relative power of the *primus* over the *pares*'[117]. Patrick Weller agrees:

> the right of prime ministers to appoint, dismiss or shuffle ministers always looms large. So does the capacity to wield extensive patronage ... The power of patronage, it is argued, helps prime ministers to cement their position and to bring ministers or others into line on issues of policy[118].

Important factors serve to limit the choices available to prime ministers in their allocation of political positions. However, though political, geographical and other considerations impinge on the freedom of choice available to the leader, patronage remains a powerful instrument. When coupled with the prestige of the prime ministership and the position of power she or he occupies, patronage is an important way to satisfy ambitious individuals, potential rivals and disparate constituencies, thus prolonging the leader's tenure.

Parliament offers a still broader constituency for prime ministers, encompassing their own caucus but also, importantly, their electoral opponents and rivals for the position. Some recent contributors have observed a decline in the importance of parliament, partly due to strict party discipline and other factors such as the rise of television[119]. Despite these trends, parliament remains a potential determinant of the power relations between leaders and followers and thus a vital forum for leadership. Parliament is the 'formal arena in which all prime ministers must publicly perform ... their performance there is consistently being assessed' by both colleagues and opponents[120]. While other forums such as the media have usurped the power of parliament, the institution remains important for prime ministers and leadership aspirants because of its role as an indicator of standing amongst peers. A worthwhile view of this aspect of parliament argues that

> Reputations can be made, or at least maintained, in parliament. Backbenchers want the team leader to do well, and to be seen to be doing well. Parliamentary performance may be one of the first indications that a prime minister is slipping. Some opposition leaders ... have been

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[117] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, p 68-9.
[118] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 72.
[119] See Michael Foley 2000, op cit, for example.
[120] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 166.

undermined because they could not match rampant prime ministers. For prime ministers, who have so many more advantages, the correlation is less direct, but if they cannot deliver or perform well that intangible standing is likely to slip. Above all, in the arena of parliament that glare of publicity is on the prime minister, they must perform at least adequately to maintain their position[121].

Competitive pressures therefore turn parliament into a political boxing ring, in which heavyweights from the major parties are called upon to demonstrate their ability to outperform opponents, and legitimise their continuing claims for the prime ministership[122].

Much of this important combative role of parliament is shared by another forum of importance - the media - and, in particular, television[123]. Colin Seymour-Ure highlights the importance of media as a conduit for prime ministerial communication with followers when he argues 'television in particular can be shown to help a prime minister dominate his or her colleagues as a performer and to provide an informal base of popular authority independent of the legislature'[124]. The media can therefore be used as an instrument of a prime minister's own power[125]. Because of the importance of the media, 'public communication cannot avoid being relevant to, and thus an influence on, almost any of a contemporary prime minister's tasks'[126].

The growing indispensability of the media to prime ministers is well documented[127]. In particular, the influence of the media on public perceptions of alternative leaders during elections is particularly strong, often defining the relations between prime ministers and their broadest constituency, the

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[121] Ibid, p 179.

[122] See John Uhr, 'Prime Ministers and Parliament' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992).

[123] See Clem Lloyd, 'Prime Ministers and the Media' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992).

[124] Colin Seymour-Ure, 'The Role of Press Secretaries on Chief Executive Staffs in Anglo-American Systems' in C Campbell and MJ Wyszomirski (eds), *Executive Leadership in Anglo-American Systems* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), p 409.

[125] Colin Seymour-Ure 2003, op cit, p 3.

[126] Ibid, p 62.

electorate. In this respect, prime ministers and prime ministerial aspirants 'appear frequently on the media, explaining and defending their actions, attacking their opponents and appealing to the voters for support'[128]. According to Anthony Mughan, the effect of media coverage is to further focus the attention of the public on the prime minister, creating a personal, individual battle between alternatives[129]. In this respect, the

> focus is on the leader, from the time that the calling of an election is contemplated until the results are known. Prime ministerial popularity is continually assessed, prime ministerial statements are examined, prime ministerial composure is analysed. Credit for victory or blame for defeat is given, in part at least, to the leader – after all, leaders are expected to win elections[130].

Though increased scrutiny makes prime ministerial action more open to criticism from all sides, the potential for influence arises out of the personalisation of executive government brought about by the media, thus improving the prime minister's position in relation to colleagues and providing a valuable platform from which to launch appeals for support.

In dealing with each of the institutions and constituencies central to the prime ministerial position, leaders possess considerable advantages in the range of advice provided them[131]. Sophisticated advisory structures available to prime ministers run counter to notions of collective, cabinet government in the traditional Westminster mould. Thus the need for individualised prime ministerial support was once contested because ministers are supposed to be chief prime ministerial advisers, with cabinet the forum for important decisions[132]. But, 'as prime ministers become more active in more areas of policy, so the need for support for the individual, rather than the collectivity in cabinet, has become

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[127] Ibid, Michael Foley 2000, op cit; Michael Foley 1993, op cit; Patrick Weller 1985, op cit.
[128] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 180.
[129] See Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit.
[130] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, pp 185-6.
[131] James Walter, 'Prime Ministers and Their Staff' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992).
[132] Patrick Weller 1991, 'Support for Prime Ministers: A Comparative Perspective', op cit, p 361.

more obvious'[133]. The combined effect of sophisticated institutions such as cabinet offices or prime minister's departments and growing political offices as sources of advice has strengthened the hand of leaders and altered the institutional dynamics of the prime ministership.

The above discussion of prime ministerial constituencies and relationships has introduced the dual contradictory influences of institutional and relational restraint coupled with an increasing personalisation of power in the hands of the prime minister[134]. Additional powers are bestowed upon the leader by the advantages inherent in the control of cabinet, superior media attention and the powers of patronage. However, the very notion that there exists a contest for power between prime ministers and their constituencies and colleagues highlights the importance of relationships to the prime ministerial task, and the requirements for leaders to maintain structures of support lest they be voted out by their party or the people and replaced by an alternative leader. Regardless, questions of prime ministerial power require more examination, a task undertaken below. For now it will suffice to say that executive government inevitably involves interactions with multiple constituencies which must be nurtured. Ignoring any of the constituencies of executive government under Westminster systems invites the use of the most important limitations on leaders – accountability to the party and the electorate. As we will discover, these remain the only substantial brakes on the power and authority of prime ministers.

Prime Ministerial Power

The traditional model of the Westminster prime ministership sits awkwardly among recent experience. The evolving constituencies of government, and the increasing power of the prime minister in relation to the actors central to the

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[133] Ibid.
[134] See Bert A Rockman, 'The Leadership Question: Is There an Answer?' in C Campbell and MJ Wyszomirski (eds), *Executive Leadership in Anglo-American* Systems (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991) p 62.

leadership task, the argument goes, create a situation where modern prime ministers enjoy significantly more authority and influence than their predecessors. This means contemporary experience contrasts with an arguably now-outdated conception of executive government in Westminster-based polities as collective and reliant upon the decision making processes of cabinet.

The ongoing debate over the relative power of prime ministers in relation to the institutions of executive government is a fundamental concern of prime ministerial scholarship[135]. However, despite half a century of debate, the literature is patchy, inconsistent and inconclusive, though there is broad agreement that prime ministers have increasing scope for individual authority and influence. Some contributors to the debate stress the *constraints* on prime ministers, while others stress the *opportunities* for dominance over colleagues. The former group, including Richard Rose[136] and George Jones[137] point to the collective nature of cabinet government in Westminster systems, contrasting power relationships with an essentially individualised presidency. Patrick Weller reconciles increasing prime ministerial power with the constraints of cabinet and caucus by stressing that only skilful leaders can take advantage of the power resources of the office[138]. Others, such as Michael Foley[139] and Anthony Mughan[140], outline the similarities between executive leadership as exercised in both Washington and Westminster[141], employing the unhelpful term 'presidentialisation'. The notable American scholar, Richard Neustadt, stresses inherent weaknesses in the American leadership model, which converges with

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[135] See, for example, Colin Campbell and John Halligan, 'The Prime Minister, Cabinet and Change' in *Political Leadership in an Age of Constraint: Bureaucratic Politics Under Hawke and Keating,* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992).
[136] Richard Rose 1982, 'Governments against Sub-governments: A European Perspective on Washington', op cit; Richard Rose 1982, 'British Government: The Job at the Top', op cit.
[137] George Jones 1991, op cit.
[138] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit; Patrick Weller 1989, op cit.
[139] Michael Foley 2000, op cit.
[140] Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit.
[141] For example Michael Foley 1993, op cit; and Michael Foley 2000, op cit.

the British system due to the constraints inherent to the American separation of powers[142].

A more comprehensive analysis of the literature follows, beginning with the earliest contributions before turning to a critique of recent preoccupation with the term 'presidentialisation' and a discussion of the more robust aspects of this recent work. The argument here is that the most worthy theoretical framework for later empirical analysis of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership is provided by the prime ministerial power literature that recognises the constraints of party and electorate while acknowledging that, despite this, some factors have contributed to the growing power of prime ministers over their colleagues, dramatically skewing the power relationship in favour of the PM.

If we follow the debate chronologically, the first contribution is the work of RHS Crossman and his introduction to Bagehot's English Constitution[143]. He argues 'the post-war epoch has seen the final transformation of Cabinet Government into Prime Ministerial Government'[144]. The increasing control over the party machine and a strong centralised bureaucracy has made obsolete 'a Cabinet behaving like a board of directors of an old-fashioned company'[145]. The central thrust of Crossman's thesis is that:

> In Bagehot's day, collective Cabinet responsibility meant the responsibility of a group of equal colleagues for decisions taken collectively, after full, free and secret discussion in which all could participate. It now means collective obedience by the whole administration, from the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor downwards, to the will of the man at the apex of power[146].

Crucially, though, the ability of the parliamentary party to remove prime ministers from power acts as a key restraint on the presidentialisation of this 'man at the apex of power', a caveat returned to below. Nonetheless, 'in so far as ministers

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[142] Richard Neustadt 'White House and Whitehall' in A King (ed), *The British Prime Minister*, (London, Macmillan, 1985); see also Richard Neustadt 1990, op cit.
[143] RHS Crossman 1963, op cit.
[144] Ibid, p 162.
[145] Ibid, p 163.
[146] Ibid, p 164.

feel themselves to be agents of the Premier, the British Cabinet has now come to resemble the American Cabinet'[147].

Early contributors to the debate, including Crossman, pointed to the changing nature of the media, increased focus on leaders during election time, the central role of the prime minister in the operation of cabinet, powers of patronage, and centralised sources of prime ministerial advice and bureaucratic support. These can be seen 'as almost structural factors which work constantly in the direction of increasing prime ministerial power, largely irrespective of the personality element'[148]. More recent incarnations of the prime ministerial power thesis have followed suit, pointing to the centrality of the leader on television and during elections, dominance of cabinet and caucus, and the sophistication of sources of advice allowing prime ministers to govern 'from the centre'. These factors, it is argued, have created a situation where the prime minister's 'influence is said to have increased to a level at which it cannot be checked; their control over government activities is regarded as excessive, and their accountability as far too limited'[149].

Peter Hennessy is a noted and authoritative scholar of prime ministerial leadership, and the only recent British contributor to steer clear of directly equating the Westminster prime ministership with the presidential model of the United States. His list of prime ministerial tasks, examined above, demonstrates the enormous gamut of duties prime ministers are expected to perform. That these are seen as prime ministerial roles not to be delegated is itself an indication of prime ministerial authority and influence; the leader is involved in all aspects of government activity.

Hennessy's 2001 publication *The Prime Minister* turns in its final pages to the most individually powerful of all British leaders, Tony Blair. Hennessy is told by a

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[147] Ibid, p 163.
[148] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, p 57.

senior Whitehall figure that Blair 'bestrides his world like a Colossus'[150]. The Prime Minister, in Hennessy's estimation, is able to govern without serious resistance from colleagues in the cabinet or elsewhere, with decisions taken largely at the centre of the Government by Blair and his trusted advisers. Hennessy's portrait of Tony Blair therefore points to an individually powerful, dominant leader consistent with most contributions to the debate over prime ministerial government.

But recent contributions from other British scholars, notably Michael Foley and Anthony Mughan, have encountered resistance because of the employment of the misleading label 'presidentialisation'. Their analyses focus on the overturning of notions of collective cabinet government in favour of a form of 'presidential' leadership observed in the United States, drawing criticism from those who point to glaring institutional incompatibilities between the leadership models of Britain and the US.

The American presidency has traditionally been seen as an office with scope for individual leadership. Though this is limited by the separation of powers, and separate institutions sharing power, and also by changing relations with fractured constituencies and a more independent Congress, presidents operate as a central component of a system which is both constitutionally legitimised and historically powerful, and which provides a significant platform for leadership. This is the basis for Foley and Mughan's individual conception of the presidency, one that contrasts with traditional notions of collective decision making at the centre of the Westminster system but, they argue, seems increasingly appropriate when describing the modern prime ministership.

There is much of value in the work of Michael Foley and Anthony Mughan, particularly in their analysis of what they call 'leadership stretch' and 'going public', and the changing focus of the media and election campaigns

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[149] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 1.

respectively. Foley has conducted two rigorous studies of the rhetorical, electoral and behavioural aspects of the prime ministerial task altering the power relations of Westminster systems and driving the leadership model towards presidentialisation[151]. Drawing on American trends towards 'spatial politics', 'getting personal' and 'going public'[152], he argues British prime ministers have pursued similar tactics as their presidential counterparts, thus contributing to a convergence in the behavioural elements of executive leadership on both sides of the Atlantic.

Central to Foley's analysis is the notion of 'leadership stretch' which refers to 'the way that party leaders have increasingly stretched away from their senior colleagues in terms of media attention and popular awareness'[153]. More specifically,

> The propulsion of leaders into public arenas and the drive to commit party agendas and programmes to a process of public outreach through the agency of leadership projection has led party leaders to become increasingly differentiated from their colleagues. Leaders are no longer merely party spokespeople, but the ostentatious flagships of their respective fleets[154].

The increasing importance of the media to political competition created a need for prime ministers to have more discretion and independence from their party, and 'to attend to political strategies that have become increasingly leadership-oriented in nature'[155]. In this respect, 'the publicisation of leaders has gone hand in hand with the personalisation of leadership'[156].

Foley relies on an explanation of dual strategies he believes to be central to Tony Blair's leadership politics. The first – spatial leadership – refers to 'the way in which political authority is protected and cultivated by the creation of a sense of

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[150] Peter Hennessy 2001, op cit, p 476.

[151] Michael Foley 1993, op cit; Michael Foley 2000, op cit.

[152] See below for a more detailed explanation of these concepts.

[153] Michael Foley 2000, op cit, p 205; see also RJ Dalton, I McAllister and MP Wattenberg, 'The Consequences of Partisan Dealignment' in RJ Dalton and MP Wattenberg (eds), *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p 51.

[154] Michael Foley 2000, op cit, p 205.

[155] Ibid, p 74.

distance, and, occasionally, detachment, from government'[157]. For Blair, Foley argues, the distancing of leaders from public institutions took the form of running as a leader separate from even his own party. 'His objective was to use the distance between the leadership and the movement to push the party *to* the people, rather than pushing the people into the party'[158].

The second 'presidential' leadership strategy identified by Foley, closely related to the first, is 'going public'. This is an expression popularised in the American context by Samuel Kernell, who argued in the mid 1980s that presidents can influence political elites in Washington by appealing directly to the electorate[159]. This means American leaders can 'generate a personal following in the country which displaces the traditional need for political negotiation and accommodation within Washington'[160]. Similarly in Britain, and arguably also in Australia, going public through the established media channels has become a prerequisite for leadership. In this respect, 'the publicisation of leaders has gone hand in hand with the personalisation of leadership' because the 'techniques, channels and dynamics of leadership projection have led inextricably to an increasing emphasis upon the exploitation of leadership politics'[161].

Foley argues these strategies serve to 'stretch' the leader away from their ministerial colleagues and the broader party. This is largely due to the electoral pressures brought to bear by changing media demands. Consequently, what 'were once media opportunities to reach a wider audience have now been turned into overriding media obligations to publicise political positions through the effective projection of party leaders as national figures'[162]. That some bemoan the individualisation of British political leadership, Foley argues, 'is a reflection of

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[156] Ibid, p 177.
[157] Ibid, p 31.
[158] Ibid, p 91.
[159] Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, (Washington, CQ Press, 1986).
[160] Michael Foley 2000, op cit, p 116.
[161] Ibid, p 177.
[162] Ibid, p 205.

the unprecedented public projection and general salience of contemporary party leaders and, in particular, the prime minister'[163].

Michael Foley's conclusions can be summarised thus. First, 'the extraordinary dominance of Tony Blair in his party and in his government has given renewed vigour to the old debate concerning the power of the prime minister in relation to the cabinet'[164]. Second, while the executive and the legislature are still technically merged, 'the two are now increasingly distinct'[165]. Third, the changes to British leadership politics under Blair 'have been of an order and magnitude to make the comparison between the British prime minister's position and the American presidency far more pertinent now than it used to be'[166]. This is because, despite structural differences,

> the underlying points of resemblance are so exceptional that there is now evidence to support the contention that the similarities between the two offices are more revealing than their differences. Furthermore, it can be contended that these similarities are increasing in scale and importance all the time[167].

Presidentialised leadership, Foley continues, is not simply the result of individual idiosyncrasies but, rather, the result of the evolution of the British prime ministership 'away from what a prime minister used to do and used to be'[168]. He argues a British presidency has developed, rather than a British version of the American presidency. Thus the prime ministership is *presidentialised* because it is *individualised*.

Anthony Mughan's book *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Elections* takes up this theme of individualisation, and argues that the political contest fought out in the media and at election time is increasingly a two-horse race between the leaders of the major parties. In this respect, he argues, 'parliamentary elections generally have the appearance less and less of contests

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[163] Ibid, p 236.
[164] Ibid, p 301.
[165] Ibid, p 309.
[166] Ibid, p 330.
[167] Ibid, p 331.
[168] Ibid, p 353.

between political parties vying for control of government and more and more presidential-style struggles between the leaders of these parties'[169]. The rise and rise of television, Mughan argues, is a key contributor to this trend, and to the 'presidentialisation of presentation and impact' of leaders[170]. A consequence of this is that election outcomes are increasingly reliant on perceptions of leaders. Mughan, drawing on British experience, charts a gradual and inconsistent rise in 'leader effects' from 1964 until 1983, and then a jump in the importance of the leader to the election outcome in 1987 and 1997[171]. This trend is closely linked with partisan dealignment; a phenomena of decreasing identification with, and long-standing ties to, political parties[172].

Mughan uses the term presidentialisation to describe a 'movement over time away from collective to personalized government, movement away from a pattern of governmental and electoral politics dominated by the political party towards one where the party leader becomes a more autonomous force'[173]. He concludes that prime ministers have become more like presidents for two main, related reasons: 'The first concerns their enhanced electoral role and the second their consequent greater autonomy in the appointment and dismissal of cabinet ministers'[174]. Thus, in a similar way to Foley, Mughan claims prime ministers are only weakly responsible to their colleagues because of their direct links with the electorate, through the media and during election campaigns.

Foley and Mughan make compelling and robust arguments for the increasing power of prime ministers brought about by strategic attempts at going public. However, their preoccupation with notions of presidentialisation weakens their case. Simply by employing terms such as 'presidentialisation' or

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[169] Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit, p 4.
[170] Ibid, see pp 23-50.
[171] Ibid, p 52.
[172] See Russell J Dalton, 'The Decline of Party Identifications', in RJ Dalton and MP Wattenberg (eds), *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2000).
[173] Anthony Mughan, op cit, p 7.
[174] Ibid, p 134.

'Americanisation', which stress a literal comparison based on formal powers and institutions and deny a proper analysis of prime ministerial behaviour, relations and structures of influence, they are muddying a credible argument about the increasing power of prime ministers, who can nonetheless never be presidential because of the unique nature of prime ministerial constraints provided by the institutions of executive government. They describe a mad dash to one-man or one-woman rule in Westminster polities that denies reality because it neglects the anchoring effect of party and electorate.

Prime ministers can never be presidential because of the importance of the parliamentary party to their continued leadership prospects. They serve at the pleasure of their party, their power is the direct result of a bargain that trades electoral success or other positives for continued support in the top job[175]. Because prime ministers are party leaders, 'they hold the former position only as long as they hold the latter' and they 'survive as long as they lead their party and maintain a parliamentary majority'[176]. A prime minister's authority and legitimacy, therefore, spring from electoral performance and party support. 'Effectively, the parliamentary party makes a running judgement on his performance as a potential winner of elections'[177]. Thus, according to Rose, a 'Prime Minister manages a party as one manages a horse: by giving sufficient rein to avoid a straight test of will between horse and rider in which the latter might be overthrown'[178]. The power possessed by parliamentary parties to dismiss prime ministers varies, but is nonetheless potent[179]. The prime minister's need for the support of party and cabinet colleagues, the argument goes, is the most important way of ensuring government remains collective in nature.

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[175] Glyn Davis 1992, op cit.
[176] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 11.
[177] Richard Rose 1982, 'Governments against Sub-governments: A European Perspective on Washington', op cit, p 7.
[178] Ibid, p 4.
[179] See Patrick Weller 1994, op cit.

George Jones[180] is perhaps the most forceful of authors arguing that constraints such as powerful ministers prevent individual (and certainly presidential) leadership. He compares the office of prime minister to a piece of elastic which can stretch 'to accommodate an active, interventionist prime minister' but which also contracts 'to contain a more passive prime minister'[181]. Jones stresses the existence of a team of ministers whose 'activities have a bearing on the reputation of the government more than in a presidential system'[182]. Each minister is said to have their own significant power resources, and scope to win support from backbenchers and from the public at large. Jones' argument, best summed up in his own words, is that commentators 'who proclaim that there has been a shift to prime ministerial predominance neglect the constraints on the holder of that office, both structural and – more important – political'[183].

John Edwards, biographer and former Keating economics and industrial relations adviser, concurs. Edwards argues power is essentially 'communal and cooperative'[184]. He continues: 'from the perspective of being inside the government, and particularly from the perspective by [sic] the record of advice and decisions, the Prime Minister really is more the committee chairman of Westminster constitutional theory than a chief executive'[185]. His conclusion: 'The government as a whole has more power than a US president, but the Prime Minister has less'[186].

The political constraints inherent to the prime ministership are also at the centre of Weller's analyses of prime ministerial power[187], though his work points rightfully to increasing scope for powerful leaders with sufficient personal skill.

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[180] George Jones 1991, op cit.
[181] Ibid, p 134.
[182] Ibid, p 124.
[183] Ibid, p 112.
[184] John Edwards, *Writing About Paul Keating: Inside the Inside* Story (Sydney Papers, Summer 1997), p 12.
[185] Ibid, p 17.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit; Patrick Weller 1989, op cit; Patrick Weller 1992, op cit. See also Michael Keating and Patrick Weller 2000, op cit, pp 57-63.

He argues prime ministerial power must be studied in relation to cabinet, rather than as if cabinet and prime ministerial power are mutually exclusive. In this respect,

> cabinet government need not be contrasted to prime ministerial government, as too often it is. The latter is seen as individualistic, the former collective. In practice a skilful prime minister may operate through the cabinet system, by determining who will decide and where decisions will be taken[188].

Drawing parallels with Neustadt's analysis of the American president's 'power to persuade'[189], Weller argues the collectivity of government means prime ministers must 'persuade and manipulate where they cannot command'[190], but prime ministerial power is concentrated and collective rather than dispersed and individual[191]. Prime ministers in Westminster systems

> must constantly negotiate and usually compromise. They are not the only actors in the political game; other ministers, business and union leaders, backbenchers, the media, all have to be taken into account. Political support must be gained and then painstakingly retained; it cannot just be demanded and then taken for granted. Governing is for prime ministers a continuous estimation of how others will react to the use of power, and how much effort is needed to achieve a desired end. Prime ministers' power and time are not infinite[192].

The concept of a prime minister working with and through cabinet, though with considerable advantages in terms of resources and prestige, is Weller's way of reconciling an unnecessarily polarised debate about individual/presidential and collective/prime ministerial power.

Essentially, prime ministers' persuasive tasks originate from the involvement of the parliamentary party in some shape or form in the selection of leaders which, taken to extreme, means that an under performing or unpopular leader, or one who fails to attend to ambitious competitors or dissatisfied colleagues, can be removed from office and replaced with a more popular alternative. This is the key difference between prime ministers and presidents and, though not often utilised,

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[188] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 408.
[189] Richard E Neustadt 1990, op cit.
[190] Patrick Weller 1992, op cit, p 205.
[191] Ibid, p 202.
[192] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 3.

represents the dichotomy between a leader who serves at the pleasure of colleagues and one who enjoys a popular mandate and may only be removed from office in extraordinary circumstances. Hart argues the 'necessity to maintain the support of party colleagues does constrain what prime ministers can do, and prevents them being presidential'[193]. For this reason, prime ministers 'cannot ignore the wishes of their party colleagues, at least not for long'[194]. Davis concurs, arguing that prime ministers, unlike presidents, have no guarantee of tenure. 'Prime ministers serve at the pleasure of the Parliament, and may be removed at any time'. Thus, 'prime ministers govern on the sufferance of their colleagues'[195].

Constraints on prime ministers do not prevent the wielding of massive, individual power, but they do prevent presidentialisation in the literal sense. This thesis recognises that the debate over prime ministerial power is sometimes unnecessarily portrayed as a contest between two ideal types – the collective Westminster model and the individual American presidency. Dunleavy and Rhodes argue the 'apparent polarization of the debate into two camps, one asserting the continuing reality of collegial decision-making amongst cabinet ministers and the other emphasizing the premier's overwhelming predominance, has artificially limited the debate'[196]. Neustadt concurs, adding that prime ministerial and presidential leadership models are 'not now at opposite poles' but instead 'located near the spectrum stretching between two ideal types, from collective-leadership to one-man rule'[197]. To this Weller adds 'the distinctions in reality are never so clear-cut' because it may 'be possible for every decision to be taken by cabinet and yet for the prime minister still to dominate'[198].

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[193] John Hart 1992, op cit, p 195.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Glyn Davis 2002, op cit, p 51.
[196] In Patrick Weller 1991, 'Prime Ministers, Political Leadership and Cabinet Government', op cit, p 131.
[197] Richard E Neustadt 1985, op cit, p 131.
[198] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 3.

This thesis concludes from the existing literature dealing with prime ministerial power that prime ministers are indeed seeking to be more independent from their colleagues, and are benefiting in an authoritative way from factors such as increasing media attention and more sophisticated sources of advice. It places itself in the tradition of those who have identified an increasingly powerful prime minister but, unlike the work of presidentialisation scholars, it acknowledges the political constraints on the PM imposed by the caucus and the electorate. The thesis also avoids equating the prime minister's job with the American president's, though some behavioural aspects of the roles have undoubtedly converged[199].

While the powers of leadership selection possessed in some form or another by a prime minister's colleagues and the electorate are significant, they do not necessarily prevent strong centralised leadership and the usurpation of the cabinet. Rather, the constraints inherent to the prime ministership represent the barrier to the presidentialisation that Foley, in particular, is quick to describe. The advantages of leadership provide for a form of prime ministerial government and account for dominant leaders in Westminster systems including, in this case, the quasi-dictatorial Prime Minister Keating nonetheless felled by an unimpressed electorate.

The thesis that follows draws on the theoretical framework supplied by the prime ministerial power debate. The interactionist approach leads to a conclusion that prime ministers such as Paul Keating are only ever as powerful as they're allowed to be, by the institutions that can constrain them. The increasing power and influence of Westminster leaders is therefore the result of an increasing willingness on the part of the parliamentary party to be led authoritatively, as well as a consequence of the employment of strategies articulated by the presidential school. Prime ministers are therefore subject to age-old constraints, but are

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[199] See C Campbell and MJ Wyszomirski 1991, op cit, p 10; John Hart 1991, op cit, p 208.

maximising their power with a complex blend of leadership strategy, modern electoral pressures, and the compliance of their peers.

A Framework for Analysis

Having laid down the theoretical foundation for this examination of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership, this chapter will now turn to the analytical framework through which the Keating experience will be viewed. This framework builds on the prime ministerial power debate discussed above, and allows for personal and party differences. It relies heavily and primarily on a template provided by Weller's *Malcolm Fraser PM*, and incorporates some of the emphases of more recent work by Mughan and Foley. The intended result is a thesis firmly in the traditions of recent prime ministerial literature, but which provides much-needed empirical data on the most recent Australian PM not still in office, and updates a literature that has become either dated, in the Australian context, or unnecessarily preoccupied with presidentialisation, as is the case with the recent British contributions.

Foundational Studies

This dissertation builds on the foundation provided by Weller, Foley and Mughan to comprehensively examine Australian prime ministerial leadership under Paul Keating. The choice of framework reflects a willingness to consider simultaneously both the institutional (Weller) and behavioural (Foley, Mughan) aspects of the prime ministership, and the ways in which Keating went about leading nation and party in an atmosphere of institutional and political constraint. The Fraser study provides us with an impressive look at the institutional relationships of the Australian prime ministership and the leader's interactions with them, and offers a basis from which to analyse the Keating prime ministership. Because of its importance to the Australian debate, and the concerns it shares with this dissertation, it is examined in some detail below.

Foley's recent work points the way towards a comprehensive analysis of prime ministerial strategies, leadership stretch and the changing character of Westminster institutions. Mughan's analysis centres upon leaders' effects on elections, mediated by the media. These studies provide this dissertation with a framework that allows for a behavioural and institutional analysis of the Keating prime ministership that takes into account personal prime ministerial style.

The concerns of *Malcolm Fraser PM* and the conclusions reached by Patrick Weller have already been introduced above. From this earlier discussion we know that Weller concerned himself with the relative power of the prime minister and the cabinet, the limitations on Australian prime ministers, the organisation of the position, and the presentational roles of leadership. The book begins with a 'close examination of the man and the position he held' before expanding to include advisory structures, ministerial relationships, party influence and relations with the media and the electorate[200]. This is largely the structure utilised for the following Keating-specific study. Further, the conclusions reached by Weller offer valuable benchmarks for comparisons of the Fraser and Keating prime ministerships and judgements about the importance of personality and party. To provide the basis for such comparisons, the lessons from each of the institutional relationships examined in *Malcolm Fraser PM* are discussed here.

Patrick Weller argues prime ministerial influence is determined by 'personal, institutional and intellectual factors'[201]. Leaders are called upon to navigate the numerous alternative power centres of prime ministerial institutions. In this regard,

> Prime ministers must constantly negotiate and usually compromise. They are not the only actors in the political game; other ministers, business and union leaders, backbenchers, the media, all have to be taken into account. Political support must be gained and then painstakingly retained; it cannot just be demanded and then taken for granted. Governing is for prime

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[200] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p xvi.
[201] Ibid, p 3.

ministers a continuous estimation of how others will react to the use of power, and how much effort is needed to achieve a desired end[202].

In addition to the political management of institutions and personalities is the all-important task of electoral politics. 'Leaders must both interact with their immediate environment – with their colleagues, with officials, with pressure groups – and meet the broad wishes and expectations of society'[203].

Prime ministers' most immediate environment is the staff of their private office and then, more broadly, the bureaucrats of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC). The systems of advice made available to Malcolm Fraser, Weller reports, reflected the individual requirements and personal style of the Prime Minister. Because 'Fraser was constantly the source of policy initiatives, derived from his experience, from his own ideas and from his conversations outside government' he 'needed machinery that would react quickly and would thrive on the pressures he created'[204]. Thus the Prime Minister's leadership style, reliant on information and a hands-on approach to governing, coloured the structure and relationships of his sources of advice and resulted in advisory arrangements that provided for Fraser's constant demands for more detail.

The interaction between the prime minister and other ministers over policy direction and portfolio interests, and in the context of resignations, dismissals, reshuffles and as a tool of patronage, are all vital components of prime ministerial leadership. The relationships are affected by ministers' own significant sources of authority and influence. Weller argues ministers 'have the potential to wield power' and can 'limit the prime minister's power – if they choose to try, if they have the capacity, if they have the support'[205]. For Malcolm Fraser, a Liberal prime minister with the final say on the ministry, the powers of patronage can be used to reward supporters and punish detractors. This, however, is tempered by the authority of other ministers, and forces the leader

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[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid, p 7.
[204] Ibid, p 21.
[205] Ibid, p 59.

into consultation with powerful individuals over the make up of the senior ranks of the government and the courses of action taken when creating or filling vacancies. Weller identifies a willingness on the part of Fraser to consult extensively in the process of making such decisions, hinting at the significant power resources held by his senior colleagues.

These considerations are magnified in relation to the cabinet. In Weller's estimation, Malcolm Fraser was an active and well-briefed chairperson, the atmosphere was formal, and votes were not taken or recorded[206]. Cabinet was consulted extensively but Fraser nonetheless dominated. In Weller's estimation,

> Everything went to cabinet; everything important was decided collectively; everyone was consulted – frequently and exhaustively. The cabinet process was used; the cabinet form adopted. Even decisions normally taken in the prime minister's office were brought within the cabinet system. Yet Fraser was still able to run the system... He used the levers of power through consultation and cabinet discussion. His success depended on the willingness and capacity of his colleagues to argue and sustain a case. Because Fraser's capacity was greater, his view prevailed most often[207].

Fraser's 'government by exhaustion' and his established supremacy in terms of information allowed him to dominate the cabinet, but traditions of collective decision making saw him respect the formal processes of cabinet rather than bypass them. This is in recognition of the 'powerful and ambitious individuals' who make up the cabinet and need to be 'managed and handled with care'[208].

Party leadership represents yet another domain in which prime ministers come up against competing power blocs and influential personalities. Prime ministerial relationships with the caucus, party organisation, state branches and wider membership require constant attention. Malcolm Fraser sought to carefully manage the Liberal Party, consult key party figures when necessary, and remain accessible to his parliamentary colleagues[209]. Caucus meetings were conducted with significant input from backbenchers who, on occasion, could shift the Prime

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[206] Ibid, pp 133-44.
[207] Ibid, p 147.
[208] Ibid, p 108.
[209] Ibid, pp 149-54.

Minister's position, gain his ear for further consultation or invite the intervention of another senior colleague[210]. The party organisation enjoyed strong ties to the leader, was consulted on the probable party reaction to policy initiatives, and even assisted with Fraser's preparation for Question Time in parliament[211]. His efforts to include caucus and the broader Liberal Party organisation in the running of the Government demonstrate the Party's own significant power resources.

As a political salesman in the media, parliament and at election time, Fraser was not, according to Weller, an impressive performer. He 'was not comfortable in these larger arenas'[212], though he was an aggressive parliamentary debater[213]. A prime minister's performances on the larger stages of the political system are important to their stores of power and their relative position among colleagues and prime ministerial institutions. In this respect, 'every occasion is a performance, with backbenchers needing to be impressed, and with the leader on display'[214]. This is the case for other constituencies too, with a running evaluation of a leader's performance being made by the cabinet and wider ministry, the media and the Australian electorate. This evaluation takes on its most intensive character during an election campaign, where the increasing focus on the leader results in presidential contests between two alternative prime ministers.

Weller concludes with some valuable observations of both Malcolm Fraser and the nature of the Australian prime ministership. The former he describes as a powerful and persuasive leader who nonetheless saw a 'necessity to consult'[215]. The lesson from the Fraser experience is that prime ministers can be authoritative if 'the individual has the powers of persuasion, the skills of manipulation, the vision to direct, the ambition to drive and the energy to

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[210] Ibid, pp 154-61.
[211] Ibid, pp 164-8.
[212] Ibid, p 177.
[213] Ibid, p 179.
[214] Ibid, p 178.

work'[216]. This lesson can be tested now on another recent Australian prime minister. While judgements on the skills of Keating as prime minister must await subsequent chapters, we take from this discussion of Patrick Weller's *Malcolm Fraser PM* a valuable template for institutional analysis and a foundation for Australian prime ministerial comparison.

The earlier discussion of the prime ministerial power debate revealed a schism between Weller's concentration on prime ministerial constraints, and Michael Foley's focus on prime ministers largely unhindered by the institutions of executive government. Despite this, both studies provide valuable precursory work for this thesis because of their reliance on institutional as well as behavioural analysis. The latter's *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership* provides an examination of the strategies employed by Blair and the effect these have on his stores of authority and influence. These conclusions are valuable for the following study of Paul Keating and prime ministerial leadership because they are made in the context of a Westminster system, describe a more recent PM and, most importantly, because the lessons from *The British Presidency* about tensions between strategic individualisation and traditional and institutional constraint apply equally to recent Australian experience.

Anthony Mughan is another British scholar whose concentration on the presidentialisation of the prime ministership is discussed above, and criticised for its neglect of prime ministerial constraints. Nonetheless, similar to Foley's work, Mughan's study offers a valuable example of prime ministerial analysis of the pressures providing modern leaders with opportunities for individual power. His comprehensive examination of electoral and media strategies is of particular value, and this approach is utilised in Chapters Seven and Eight, below.

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[215] Ibid, p 409.
[216] Ibid.

In summary, this thesis is built on the template provided by Patrick Weller in his seminal 1989 analysis of Malcolm Fraser. Further, it shares the concerns and research foci of Michael Foley's examination of prime ministerial strategies and Anthony Mughan's analysis of media and electoral aspects of the position. That these three foundational studies do not concur in their conclusions about prime ministerial power does not necessarily prevent their providing a coherent research framework for this dissertation. Indeed, it is hoped that the analysis of Paul Keating that follows draws on all the strengths of these studies, but offers a fresh and empirically-based argument about prime ministerial power in Australia.

Allowing for Difference

It is also worthwhile, before embarking on the empirical discussion of the Keating Prime Ministership, to consider here some deviations from the model provided by Weller, Foley and Mughan, and important additional concerns of this dissertation. Firstly, in contrast with *Malcolm Fraser PM*, this thesis will not consider policy debates separate from the analysis of institutional relationships. Here, rather, key events and policy or personnel decisions will be analysed in the context of these relationships and, as such, will be situated among the chapters on institutional interaction. This largely reflects a consideration of available space. Second, differences in the emphasis on various institutions will be found as a result of the varied interests of the two prime ministers. Finally, this dissertation asks some additional questions which, necessarily, deviate from the framework and concerns developed by Weller. Namely, it will be asked here what differences in the structures of prime ministerial power are evidenced in the prime ministership of Paul Keating compared to that of other prime ministers, to what extent Paul Keating's own personal style of leadership impacted on the power resources available to him and accounts for disparities of influence and authority, and what implications *Labor* leadership has on the prime ministerial task. These additional questions enhance the value of the thesis by stressing difference without sacrificing the central questions of the prime ministerial power debate. The result, it is hoped, is a re-examination of the power of prime

ministers in Australia taking into account these additional concerns and the provision of supplementary insights into the job.

Much of the prime ministerial power and leadership literature is system, rather than personality, specific. Though some have argued a prime minister's stores of authority and influence are related to their own ability to garner power[217], individual leadership styles are not often taken into account. If they are, it is in a biographical way rather than utilising a more targeted approach. Similarly with the differences between the parties from which prime ministers spring. A legitimate case can be made that the leadership structures of conservative and social democratic parties differ, thus providing alternative leadership environments for prime ministers to navigate. This dissertation, building on the literature discussed above, allows for personal and party differences when examining Paul Keating in the context of Australian prime ministerial leadership.

Another analytical difference is the ideology of the leader's party. Prime ministers are necessarily party leaders. This dissertation's reliance on an interactionist model of prime ministerial leadership thus invites some consideration of the power structures central to the organisation of their political party. If, as has been argued, conservative parties exhibit a more authoritarian structure of leader influence, it can then be demonstrated that the structures of authority and influence unique to social democratic parties compel leaders to navigate institutional and cultural influences in ways different to their political opponents[218].

Here the leadership differences between major parties in Britain and Australia are discussed, drawing on a debate taking place in British literature since the 1960s. This allows for party differences between, for example, the Coalition led by Malcolm Fraser and Keating's Australian Labor Party. Though this argument is not without its detractors, the concept of a specific form of 'labour' democracy is

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[217] See, for example, George Jones 1991, op cit; Patrick Weller, 1989, op cit.

discussed here with an eye to later analysis of party leadership and comparisons with the benchmarks provided by Weller's Fraser publication.

Two protagonists in the party leadership debate are R.T. McKenzie[219] and Samuel Beer[220]. McKenzie's thesis, broadly stated, is that leader-follower relations are essentially the same in both the Conservative and Labour parties in Britain. Despite formal differences in rules or organisational structure, he argues, the leader is similarly powerful across the party spectrum because of his or her position as an alternative or actual prime minister, armed with the power resources that such a position brings. More specifically, describing the formal structure of the parties, McKenzie writes:

> the formal description of the powers of the Conservative Leader would suggest that, once elected, he can play the autocrat with impunity; in contrast, the Labour Leader appears to be hemmed round with restrictions which ensure his subservience both to the party in Parliament and to the mass party organization outside[221].

Despite this, however, and aside from the different power resources available to individual leaders of both parties, 'there is no significant difference ... between *Labour* Prime Ministers and *Conservative* Prime Ministers'. In this respect, 'the variations depend on the personality, temperament and ability of the individual concerned rather than on his party affiliation'[222].

The central theme of McKenzie's work – party leadership similarity – is not accepted by Beer[223] and others[224]. To demonstrate a divergence in leadership models, Beer describes 'socialist' democracy, which is able to reconcile strict party discipline with democratic participation as a result of a reliance on class

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[218] Colin Campbell and John Halligan, op cit, p 16.
[219] RT McKenzie, *British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power Within the Conservative and Labour Parties* (London, Heinemann, 1963).
[220] Samuel Beer, *Modern British Politics* (London, Faber and Faber, 1982).
[221] RT McKenzie 1963, op cit, p 297.
[222] Ibid, p 298.
[223] Samuel Beer 1982, op cit.
[224] For example Michael Foley 2000, op cit; Jean Blondel, *Voters, Parties and Leaders* (London, Penguin, 1966).

theory[225]. This contrasts with the Tory view of democracy; that 'Order requires Hierarchy'[226]. The difference in democratic views is that 'one sees, and approves, horizontal division' whilst the 'other sees, and approves, vertical integration'[227]. As a consequence of alternative democratic views, Labour emphasises programs, according to Beer, whilst the Tories stress leadership. Labour exhibits 'a degree of pluralist democracy that is worlds apart from the elitism of the Conservatives'[228]. Beer's thesis, in contrast to that of McKenzie, is that 'in practice as in theory, in the actual distribution of power as in their reigning conceptions of authority, the two parties were deeply opposed'[229].

Jean Blondel agrees, arguing 'things are different in the Conservative party' because 'that organization is an 'autocratic' one in the sense that decisions are taken by the leader of the party and by the leader of the party alone, at least in theory'[230]. More recently, Foley has argued the 'Labour Party has long been considered immune from the sort of free-wheeling improvisation that has traditionally marked the Conservative Party and led to the idiosyncratic individualism of its leaders'[231]. In this respect,

> Labour leaders are almost invariably placed in a predicament where they have to compete with the Conservative party's traditions of strong leadership and loyal followship, and the need to accommodate Labour's roots as a participatory organisation originally developed outside parliament[232].

Proponents of the difference in leadership structure between parties point to a uniqueness in Labour's conception of party democracy, and the importance placed upon participation from members, in contrast to the authoritarian structure of power inherent to the Conservative's leadership authority based upon individualised and dictatorial leadership.

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[225] Samuel Beer 1982, op cit, p 86.
[226] Ibid, p 92.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid, p 388.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Jean Blondel 1966, op cit, p 115.
[231] Michael Foley 2000, op cit, pp 76-7.
[232] Ibid, p 77.

James MacGregor Burns joins the debate by arguing that, essentially, the difference between the power structures of Labour and Conservative parties in Britain can be attributed to their origins[233]. Labour's trade union beginnings outside of parliament would ensure that extra-parliamentary structures would retain some influence over the party's representatives in the Commons. Thus, 'it became an article of faith in the Labour Party that the ultimate subservience of the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Party outside Parliament was proof of the democratic structure of "the Movement"'[234].

The distinctions drawn by this group of scholars can apply equally to Australian experience. Australian Labor's concept of extra-parliamentary participation, like the Party itself, has a long history. Contributing to a recently published and Party-sanctioned history of the ALP caucus, Frank Bongiorno argued that by

> 1901 the Party had already introduced into Australian politics a new understanding of democracy. In theory at least, working-class electors were not only to have an opportunity to select candidates prior to elections and vote for Labor candidates at election time, but also to have a hand in framing Party policy between elections[235].

Consequently, Labor developed mechanisms such as the Party pledge, state and national executives and a regular policy conference to ensure extra-parliamentary input into the affairs and decisions of the elected parliamentary representatives[236]. A demarcation existed, whereby 'Federal Conference formed the policy, Federal Executive supervised it, and the Parliamentary Party implemented it'[237]. The effect of this, according to Gordon Childe, was to make Labor politicians representatives of the labour movement rather than the

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[233] James MacGregor Burns 1979, op cit, pp 316-22.
[234] Ibid, p 318.
[235] Frank Bongiorno, 'The Origins of Caucus: 1856-1901' in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001), p 3.
[236] Ibid, p 4.
[237] Sean Scalmer, 'Crisis to Crisis: 1950-66' in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001), pp 91-2.

electorate[238]. A famous illustration of extra-parliamentary influence within the Labor Party came in 1963, when the *Daily Telegraph* published a photo of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition standing outside a Canberra hotel while '36 faceless men' – the Party's executive – were inside deciding Labor's policy on a 'matter of international importance'[239]. 'This stubborn thing called "Labor democracy"'[240] has therefore been important to the development and traditional participatory ethos of Australian Labor.

Though much recent work has stressed the growing power of the labour leader in the contest for influence engaged with extra-parliamentary organisations and the grass roots, there remains a weakening tradition of limited leadership within labour parties of the centre-left. The degree of power enjoyed by leaders of major parties is converging, but the types and character of constituencies dealt with by alternative leaders remains remarkably different. Recognition of this allows for more telling conclusions about the requirements of the position and the nature of political leadership in Australia, as does an understanding of the impact of personal and political style.

Paul Keating and the Prime Ministerial Power Debate

The final and most obvious difference for which any analysis of prime ministerial leadership must allow is personal leadership style. In David Adams' brief analysis of Paul Keating he discusses the behaviour, speech making, perceptions of strength, strategic political positioning and language of the prime minister[241]. Personality, in his and Graham Little's estimation, is a valuable way to understand leadership. But, as Weller highlights, there are difficulties associated with determining a prime minister's style because of the many considerations this entails. Style

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[238] In Terry Irving, 'The Growth pf Federal Authority: 1929-40' in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001), p 61.
[239] Sean Scalmer 2001, op cit, pp 100-1.
[240] Terry Irving 2001, op cit, p 60.

> Relates not only to behaviour in crises but also to the daily running of government business. Style refers to the skilful manipulation of others, the capacity of a leader to inspire or persuade, the way in which decisions are made, the techniques that the leader uses[242].

These considerations comprise a vital component of leadership inquiry, and allow for variations in the power resources available to prime ministers from the same political system.

Paul Keating had a unique manner that colours any analysis of his leadership. Paul Kelly, senior journalist and author, commented in an interview for this thesis that with Keating, 'personality is important'. Because 'Keating was a very passionate prime minister', who 'brought his own stamp to bear on the Government'. Further, he

> defined the agenda of his government, he presented his agenda to the people. He determined the chemistry of the relationship between his Government and the people. These days people tend to see the Government and interpret the Government through the prime minister, and I think in Keating's prime ministership in particular, they interpreted it through his values and through his mannerisms, through his moods. So if the prime minister was witty or charming, they were interested and enthralled. If he was indulgent and petty and angry then they got turned off. So I think the mood and personality of the prime minister became all-important[243].

Don Watson's biography concurs with this notion of the people reacting to the ebbs and flows of the Keating prime ministerial persona[244].

Personal style and leadership are topics to which Graham Little has devoted much scholarly attention[245]. Little highlights popular perceptions of Keating as brutal, arrogant, proud, ambitious and strong[246], and sees in him a narcissistic pride which leads to a self-driven pursuit of reform[247]. The Keating style was thus characterised by 'an image of sharpness', a 'capacity for spoken aggression and

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[241] David Adams 1997, op cit.

[242] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 7.

[243] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.

[244] See Don Watson 2002, op cit.

[245] See, for example, Graham Little, *Political ensembles: a psychosocial approach to politics and leadership* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985); or Graham Little, *Politics and Personal Style* (Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1973). See also Chapter Eight, 'Pressing the Flesh', below.

[246] Graham Little, 'Leading Change', *St Mark's Review*, no 171, Spring 1997, p 12.

contempt' and a 'user's knowledge of the richest language of the street'[248]. Though little is mentioned here of the statesmanlike side to the Keating persona, the brawler aspect is highlighted.

Paul Keating was essentially an adversarial, risk taking politician in the 'crash through or crash style'[249]. Watson has argued that in 'Australia's adversarial political system Keating was the most adversarial of all. He refused to give his opponent anything, ever'[250]. Geoff Kitney of the *Sydney Morning Herald* agreed in an interview with this author. His view was that Keating 'had a winner takes all approach, you go into the fight and you fight until the last man standing, and this applied to colleagues as well as the opposition. On most things that style meant that he won the battles'. Further, the way he wielded power was to be savagely insistent that his views were right and his opponents wrong[251].

Paul Keating was thus an archetypal conviction politician, who held firm beliefs and was combative in his promotion of them. The American political scientist Patricia Lee Sykes argues that conviction politicians see parties as a 'nuisance' to a leader who seeks fundamental change, and sells a message through the media[252]. Keating fits this description, and was known for taking public stands without consulting first with caucus and cabinet. Consistent with Sykes' thesis, sometimes the issues upon which Keating showed conviction ran counter to what was considered good politics.

Another related trait commonly associated with Keating was political courage. Alan Ramsey wrote in a column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in August 1993: 'Paul Keating is never more dangerous than when he's in trouble. If his judgment is erratic, his courage is not. The one with the other can be lethal. ... Keating

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[247] Graham Little, 'The two narcissisms: comparing Hawke and Keating' in J Brett (ed.), *Political Lives* (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997).
[248] Ibid, p 20.
[249] This is an expression also used to describe one of Keating's predecessors, Gough Whitlam.
[250] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 446.
[251] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.

fights hard and he often doesn't fight fair'[253]. Don Watson believed 'Courage was Keating's hallmark and his stock in trade, as for some good politicians it is nous, charm or practicality. Keating had these other attributes, but they did not define him in the way that courage did'[254].

These views of Keating relate closely to his own assessment of the political style he took to the prime ministership. The oft-quoted 'down hill, one ski, no poles'[255] is an apt description of this approach. More than one former Keating staffer raised these words, unprompted, when talking about his style and the nature of the prime ministerial operation. An extension of this theme was provided by Keating to an Irish television interviewer when he said 'I'm a punter ... I tend to take political risks and I don't mind risking my own hide from time to time because I've always said to my colleagues, the worst thing that can happen to you in this game is to lose your job. So why be a mouse?'[256].

Importantly, Paul Keating also exhibited melancholic behaviour, manifested in his periodic disengagement from some of the tasks of the prime ministership, and his almost depressive outlook. Medical and psychological characteristics of leaders are subjects infrequently analysed in academic literature, with some rare exceptions[257]. But, in Keating's case, his depressive behaviour in office is a key factor in his ability to perform the role. Part of this can be attributed to the family or personal problems he experienced during his tenure, a sensitive issue raised by Watson and confirmed by other interviewees for this thesis[258]. Melancholy remains the most appropriate word to describe Keating's personality during his

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[252] Patricia Lee Sykes, *Presidents and Prime Ministers: Conviction Politics in the Anglo-American Tradition* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2000), pp 219-20.
[253] Alan Ramsey, 'Deals, Not Elections, in the Air', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1993, p 31.
[254] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 432.
[255] See Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 193.
[256] David Day 2000, op cit, p 429.
[257] See, for example, the American literature on presidential health, including: Robert E Gilbert, *The Mortal Presidency: Illness and Anguish in the White House*, (New York, Basic Books, 1992); Robert H Ferrell, *Ill-Advised: Presidential Health and Public Trust*, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1992). See also Jerrold M Post and Robert S Robins, *When illness strikes the leader: the dilemma of the captive king*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993).
[258] Private conversations.

years as PM. It has been depicted as 'a gloomy state of mind', 'sober thoughtfulness' and 'pensiveness'[259]. Don Watson sees it 'leaving the sufferer feeling worthless and abandoned', equating it with 'struggling through a thick fog in lead boots'[260]. He believes melancholic behaviour 'was frequently the way with Paul Keating and sometimes it became like this for those who served him'[261]. The remainder of Watson's book is consistent with this assessment of Keating's personality, and we see from the analysis in this thesis that follows that disengagement from, for example, electoral politics can be viewed as an extension of the Prime Minister's periodic descent into a state of mind not conducive to the public and labour-intensive aspects of prime ministerial leadership.

Keating's personal style is the final component of a framework that incorporates precursory work by Weller, Foley and Mughan and takes into account party difference. The intersection of prime ministerial institutions and personality, in the context of the constraints forced on a leader by party and electorate, it is argued here, provides the most appropriate lens through which to examine in detail the recent Australian prime ministership of Paul Keating. This approach marries the institutional approach of Weller and the strategic and behavioural emphases of Foley and Mughan, and takes into account personal and party differences. Thus, while the chapters are organised institutionally, at all times consideration of personality will be intertwined with analysis of the institutional constraints imposed by parliament, the media, caucus, bureaucracy and electorate. This approach mirrors that of the interactionist school of leadership inquiry represented by Elgie and focussed on the intersection of the leader with his or her leadership environment. The result is a more complete analysis of Paul

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[259] According to the Macquarie Dictionary online: www.macquariedictionary.com.au .
[260] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 63.
[261] Ibid.

Keating and prime ministerial leadership in Australia and a fresh perspective on the prime ministerial power debate.

3

Leading Labor

Prime Ministers govern on the sufferance of their colleagues[262].

The Australian parliamentary system ensures prime ministers are also, simultaneously, party leaders. Paul Keating, as leader of the Australian Labor Party, was required to carefully maintain relationships with the parliamentary caucus, the organisational wing of the Party, trade union leaders and the organised factions. Generally, how leaders navigate their way through these alternative institutional power bases is vital to the health of their prime ministership and to the maintenance of the position. A prime minister's very existence is predicated on party support which can, at any time in Australia, be withdrawn.

Keating's tenure as Labor leader was characterised by a complete dominance of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party; a politically close and productive relationship with Bill Kelty, Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the industrial labour movement's key figure; poisonous relations with the ALP National Secretariat, and stable management of the Party's well-entrenched factional system. The lack of an alternative leader and the timidity of a parliamentary caucus firmly under Keating's spell ensured there was no likelihood of a challenge to his leadership. This provided the preconditions for a detached form of Party leadership where there was little need for constant cultivation of backbenchers or extensive consultation. Important preconditions for Party dominance delivered Keating a confidence of tenure, which meant he

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[262] Glyn Davis 2002, op cit, p 51.

could afford to be 'more intent on reaching decisions and then driving them through the Party processes'[263] .

The circumstances by which Paul Keating reached the prime ministership would seem to suggest that caucus would require constant attention and demand frequent consultation. The Party was split evenly between the two leadership protagonists, as the tight 56-51 result of the second Keating challenge illustrated[264], and the fault lines after at least a year of manoeuvring ran extremely deep. Mike Steketee wrote only days after the change of leadership that Keating had 'clawed his way to the top of his party's pile after a pitched battle of six months which has left the road to political revival littered with the corpses of almost half the members of the Caucus'[265]. Keating's willingness to depose a sitting prime minister also created a precedent that could have worked against the stability of his leadership tenure.

The likelihood that Keating faced an uphill battle in gaining and maintaining the confidence and support of a fractured Party led him to make some promises at the outset regarding caucus consultation and input. Two such post-transition pledges were recorded in the print media at the time: 'from now on, he solemnly assured the assembled acolytes from the Canberra press corps, he would always keep in touch with the ordinary backbenchers, consult them regularly and inject their views into policy-making'[266]. In another press conference he again promised to listen, and spoke of the presence of 'a lot of wisdom in the caucus'[267]. For various reasons, argued below, Paul Keating was never compelled to make good on his pledges to regularly consult the Parliamentary Party. He enjoyed the preconditions of Party dominance, skewing the power

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[263] Mike Steketee 'Labor in Power: 1983-96' in J Faulkner and S Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001) p 156.
[264] The first challenge saw Hawke hold off Keating by winning 66 votes to Keating's 44.
[265] Mike Steketee, 'Keating's Crown of Thorns', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1991, p 41; see also Michelle Grattan, 'One Vote Down, But the Real One's Still to Come', *Age*, 20 December, 1991, p 1.
[266] Peter Robinson, 'Humbug, This Humility', *Sun Herald*, 22 December 1991, p 24.
[267] Peter Hartcher, 'Keating Scrapes In', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1991, p 1.

relationship between Prime Minister and Party drastically in his favour. This remained the case throughout Keating's relatively brief four and a quarter year tenure[268].

The relationship between prime minister and party is effectively conceptualised by Glyn Davis as a 'leadership bargain'[269]. This is 'a compact between leaders and led, a social exchange in the interests of collective success, a transaction between a party room which wants leadership and a prime minister who needs a majority'[270]. The basis of the bargain is that backbenchers rely on the skills and popularity of the leader in order to retain office, which means a 'leader who can deliver office thus exerts a powerful attraction'; 'the leader does not have to be good, or even popular, just successful'[271]. In return, the caucus makes a running judgement on the prospects for continued success and provides or withdraws support accordingly.

To observe the consequences of prime ministerial under-performance we need look no further than the experiences of Bob Hawke in Australia in 1991 and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1990, both removed from office by dissatisfied colleagues. The substantial weapon wielded by the Party room is the ability to withdraw support at any time and hand the job to an alternative leader. This, correctly, is seen as the most significant brake on prime ministerial power in Westminster systems[272]. In Australia this is particularly so; both major parties require only a 'spill' motion and a caucus ballot. This contrasts with practice in the UK, for example, where the process is more complex. Indeed 'in few other places is the contract between leader and led so distinct and so easy to call to account'[273]. While a prime minister is rarely removed, the threat of removal inevitably colours prime ministerial behaviour.

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[268] Whether he could have sustained this if he had won another term is a worthwhile question, but one that we cannot, nonetheless, answer.
[269] Glyn Davis 1992, op cit.
[270] Ibid, p 79.
[271] Ibid, p 68.
[272] See John Hart 1992, op cit, p 194; Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 18.
[273] Patrick Weller 1992, op cit, p 206.

What, then, is the effect of the ever-present threat of the withdrawal of party support? Davis argues the situation results in 'continuous and exhaustive' contact with 'parliamentary accomplices', where the prime minister is reminded at times of conflict that 'substantive political authority rests with the party room'[274]. In more detail, the leader must 'embody the values of the party' and 'win the support of a small, individually ambitious but collectively nervous and risk-averse collective known as the parliamentary caucus... by offering the prospect of spoils, unity or direction'. Davis argues that 'party leaders may indeed have to give more than they take' because 'the party can withdraw support, and with it office, at any time'[275].

The relationship with the parliamentary party, because of the removal mechanism, is the most important aspect of the prime minister - party relationship. The leadership bargain sums up the exchange of support for the promise of continued success and patronage. In reality, of course, relationships of party support and dependence are much more complicated because the party comprises more than just the parliamentary caucus, it incorporates diverse and overlapping power structures and institutions. The broader party is made up of state and federal branches, factions, unions (in the case of labour parties) and various sub-groupings and personal fiefdoms. While members 'share a common ambition to see their party in office', 'the structures they work through are voluntary, complex and often lacking neat boundaries'[276]. With several competing power centres comes an onus on the prime minister to consult with other key actors in the broader party[277]; 'The structure of the party outside parliament determines the number of independent centres of power that exist within the party and therefore the number of bodies with whom the prime minister may need to maintain a direct relationship'[278].

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[274] Glyn Davis 1992, op cit, p 67.
[275] Ibid, p 66.
[276] Ibid, p 66.
[277] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 20.
[278] Ibid, p 19.

The party organisation, in Australia comprising a national office as well as state branches, is an alternative power source which has significant responsibilities such as the running of election campaigns and control of the party's finances. This creates a relationship of interdependence which is vital to the prospects of electoral success. The office of the prime minister and the party's organisational structure are both 'part of the same web of relationships, a web which links the aspirations of local branches, the interests of state divisions and the hopes of those in parliament'[279]. Again, electoral considerations are vital; 'the organisation values success; anything less and the leaders are not keeping their side of the bargain'[280].

Labor prime ministers face additional constituencies such as the trade union movement and a more sophisticated and developed factional system. There is also a lingering, though admittedly decreasingly influential, tradition of policy and platform development taking place at National Conferences and other forums of the broader party, outside the walls of the caucus or cabinet room. This adds layers of complexity to the Labor leader's maintenance of key constituencies.

It is an extremely significant act for caucus to replace a sitting prime minister. It doesn't happen often but it has happened, and the threat can be enough to compel leaders to consult or give way on particular issues. Prime ministers are not presidential because their tenure is not guaranteed, it depends on continuing party support. But leaders also enjoy considerable scope in the course of their stewardship of the party leadership. A skilful leader can dominate her or his party through the use of patronage, by force of personality, or by demonstrating electoral prowess.

This chapter deals exclusively with Prime Minister Keating's relationships with the various constituencies of the Australian Labor Party. Examined in turn are his

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[279] Glyn Davis 1992, op cit, p 75.

interactions with the Parliamentary Labor Party, the organised factional system, the Party organisation and the trade union movement. These relationships are examined here in the context of the leadership bargain outlined by Glyn Davis and introduced above.

The argument of this chapter is that Paul Keating comprehensively dominated his Party for several reasons. First, Labor's unexpected election victory in 1993, largely attributed to Keating's own contribution, earned for the Prime Minister unprecedented authority and influence, more even than that afforded Whitlam in 1972 and Hawke in 1983. Second, his own personality and alternately forceful or charming approach to his dealings with caucus was a factor in their subservience. Third, the rigid factional system, under development since the outset of the Hawke Government, provided Keating with a continuing base of support from which to operate and through which the Party could solve disputes and allocate patronage. Fourth, his close personal and professional relationship with Bill Kelty ensured the unions were in step with the Prime Minister's agenda. Fifth, the active policy agenda encompassing traditional Labor concerns such as economic stimulus, republicanism, and indigenous affairs satisfied supporters and the Party's left. The recent history of the dumping of Prime Minister Hawke left few caucus members with the will to go through the debilitating process again. Finally, at no stage of the Keating prime ministership was there a credible and *willing* leadership alternative. The only potentially viable alternative, Kim Beazley Junior[281], was not actively seeking the leadership and remained loyal to Keating throughout. The Prime Minister, as a result of these factors, remained absolutely authoritative for the entire period of his leadership. According to Pamela Williams, 'no-one in the party had the courage to take Keating on. Not Beazley, not the machine, not the caucus'[282].

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[280] Ibid.
[281] From now on Kim Beazley Junior will be referred to simply as Kim Beazley.
[282] Pamela Williams 1997, 'Behind the Victory', op cit, p 105.

Paul Keating led the Australian Labor Party on his terms. The leadership bargain greatly favoured the Prime Minister because the one significant weapon at caucus' disposal – the removal mechanism – was never likely to be unsheathed. Because caucus rarely challenged the PM and couldn't realistically dump him, especially after the heroics of the 1993 poll, and because of generally favourable relationships with factional and labour movement leaders, Keating could afford to place less emphasis on caucus, organisational and other forms of Party consultation. As a result, his was a detached or arms-length form of party leadership, contingent on continuing caucus compliance.

The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party

This analysis of Prime Minister Keating's relationship with the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) examines caucus meetings, the degree of access available to backbenchers, and the extent to which they were consulted by Keating in the course of his leadership of the Party. Also examined in some detail are criticisms of his style of caucus interaction, the issues upon which the FPLP and the Prime Minister clashed, and the somewhat rare instances where caucus openly showed dissent against Keating's policy direction or took exception to his style. Next, the factors which contributed to the Prime Minister's dominance of the Labor caucus will be examined. The argument is that the absence of any credible attempt to replace Keating, the authority and influence granted by the 1993 election victory, the timidity of caucus, and his own approach to caucus relations were the key factors that explain his ability to govern without significant restraint from the views and sentiments of the FPLP.

The make-up of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (caucus) is provided in Appendix One. It remained relatively stable in size, though a handful of personnel changes took place, particularly at the 1993 election and at subsequent by-elections during the second Keating term. Caucus under Paul Keating met regularly during parliamentary sitting periods to discuss the political and policy

issues of the day, to receive a briefing from the Prime Minister and be given the opportunity to ask him questions. From the available accounts it would seem that Keating took these speeches to caucus seriously, impressing backbenchers such as Les Scott, Jim Snow and Mark Latham[283]. The latter found them particularly helpful, relating in an interview with this author that Keating would

> give his reports, and they were enriching, nourishing reports. They were reports about issues and plans for the nation. So intellectually I found those reports very engaging. He'd give his report, and there were some questions about policy issues new and old – not really challenging him but trying to add some value to the things that he was trying to progress. So I wouldn't say there was any personal challenge or criticism of him, but with his high level intellectual engagement with the caucus there were people trying to grapple with the big issues, trying to add a bit of value to the process[284].

Mike Steketee has argued that the 'Leader's reports to Caucus, like his performances in Parliament, became rhetorical tours de force, reviving the spirit of a party consistently trailing in the opinion polls'[285].

Despite the seriousness with which Keating approached his reports to caucus, he did not dedicate himself wholeheartedly to consultation with his colleagues[286]. In his dealings with caucus he could be forced into greater dialogue with backbenchers only rarely, and only on issues of particular importance or attracting unusually high levels of angst (see below). By midway through his term, the pattern of prime ministerial consultation with caucus was set, though at times Keating could show a softer, more consultative side. After productive and well-received discussions with the FPLP over the 1994 budget, for example, one Labor MP was quoted as saying that the 'direction of change', towards a more consultative PM, 'has been good', though 'Keating is never going to be a consulter'. The caucus critic continued: 'there is still too much, when he addresses Caucus, of giving out the line which people are supposed to accept uncritically'[287].

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[283] Interviews with Jim Snow (4 April 2002), Les Scott (4 April 2002) and Mark Latham (3 June 2002).
[284] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[285] Mike Steketee 2001, op cit, p 155.
[286] See, in particular, Chapter Four on Keating's relationship with Cabinet.
[287] Bruce Jones, 'Voice of a Listening Leader', *Sun Herald*, 11 September 1994, p 29.

So if Prime Minister Keating only rarely consulted with his parliamentary colleagues, and then largely only when forced to do so, what scope was there for backbenchers to have access to the PM, to voice their concerns? Accounts vary, from the critical line taken by author and journalist Pamela Williams to the neutral account provided by Labor MP Darryl Melham. The former argued shortly after Labor's election defeat that 'no-one beyond the inner circle ever got in to see Keating'[288]. Melham disagrees, describing caucus access as conducted with an open door policy, where members could drop in to the Prime Minister, but this rarely happened because backbench MPs were intimidated by Keating[289]. Either way, there was little observable conversation between the PM and his colleagues[290].

Mark Latham offers a perceptive summary of caucus access to Prime Minister Keating. The first factor determining access, according to the Werriwa MP, was length of tenure and familiarity to Keating. Latham explained to this author that he:

> was elected at the beginning of 1994 and as a greenhorn backbencher and the newest addition to the caucus I've got to say I didn't think it was my station in life to be rocking around to the PM's office, knocking on the door and saying 'g'day Paul', you know, crack open a tinnie and let's chew the fat! But obviously there were some in the caucus who knew him a lot longer and were more familiar with him personally, and would have felt that access to him was quite easy[291].

Another factor, in a similar vein to that expressed above by Daryl Melham, was the preparedness of members of the caucus to go and see the PM. Latham expressed his surprise, after reading the Don Watson biography of Keating, that Robert Ray had complained about access but was rarely seen near the Prime Minister's Office. 'You get no access if you don't turn up', Latham remarked, and 'if you don't turn up you shouldn't complain about it'[292].

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[288] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 124.
[289] See Peter FitzSimons 1998, op cit, p 396.
[290] Interview with Bruce Childs, 16 January 2003.
[291] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[292] Ibid.

Mark Latham also usefully categorised Labor MPs into three groups, with varying access to Prime Minister Keating. The first group comprises 'the newcomers who would be feeling their way and who wouldn't think it was their role to be buzzing around the PM's office'. The second group is made up of those 'people who'd known Paul and would have been allies of his'. The final category were backbenchers 'who probably didn't get along with him all that well and who weren't that comfortable trying to access his operation either'. This categorisation suggests there was no blanket rule for access; it depended largely on personality and individual relationships rather than factional or other considerations. Latham's conclusions regarding access are that Keating 'had a strong personality, and by and large didn't get along that well with certain people in the caucus' whereas 'others thought the world of him and he thought the world of them'. Interpersonal factors such as these are what 'determines access rather than an across-the-board judgement as to the openness of his office'[293].

Backbenchers would also, from time to time, put their thoughts on the Government's direction to paper. John Langmore, a Canberra MP, and occasional Keating critic, for example, was prompted by a deteriorating set of employment figures to write to the Prime Minister about the problem. One *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist described such a letter as the kind 'from an uppity Labor backbencher that makes' the Prime Minister's 'lips curl'[294]. It seems, though, from available accounts, that letters such as these were not a regular occurrence. For the Parliamentary Party, access to Keating was limited to regular caucus meeting reports and an occasional visit to his office by either the bravest MPs or those closest and most familiar to the Prime Minister.

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[293] Ibid.
[294] Bernard Lagan, 'An Appeal to Middle-Class Goodwill', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April 1993, p 11.

Caucus Criticism, Conflict, Clashes

Paul Keating's relationship with the Parliamentary Labor Party was often criticised because of the absence of real, meaningful dialogue, especially in contrast to the largely accessible and fraternal Hawke. Though, as former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe recounted in an interview for this thesis, 'there were few occasions where there was any real revolt in caucus and any atmosphere that really threatened the authority of the Prime Minister'[295], caucus members did occasionally publicly criticise the Keating approach. One anonymous backbencher commented in 1995 that the Prime Minister 'seemed to be on a transcendental high, cruising in his mind and remote from the government'[296]. Another, Victorian MP Peter Cleeland, argued that the 'problem was the complete gulf between some very good backbenchers and ministers and what they thought about political issues, and what the prime minister thought'[297]. Laurie Ferguson was another critic, whose comment that Keating represented an 'electoral dead loss' was seen by one journalist as a declaration representing 'the bristling hostility of perhaps a quarter of the Caucus'[298].

Despite these criticisms, Prime Minister Paul Keating was largely unchallenged by the Labor caucus, with some rare, but nonetheless significant, exceptions relating to specific Government policy decisions. For example, Keating's 1995 decision to allow Ros Kelly to resign from parliament and bring on a disastrous by-election which saw the previously safe seat of Canberra fall to the Liberal Party was taken without any reference to caucus or cabinet, drawing considerable ire[299]. Another example of caucus policy dissent came in May of the same year with the discovery that the Government was participating in a US-led initiative to bug the Chinese embassy in Canberra[300]. Examined here in more detail are, in

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[295] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[296] Quoted in Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 29.
[297] Ibid, pp 113-14.
[298] Peter Hartcher, 'Keating May Yet Return to Life', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 January 1992, p 11.
[299] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 30.
[300] Bruce Jones, 'Keating Faces Backbench Blast', *Sun Herald*, 28 May 1995, p 3.

chronological order, the illustrative cases of caucus revolts over pay television policy, the 1993 budget, woodchipping, and the Carmen Lawrence affair.

The first clash between Prime Minister Keating and the Labor caucus came mid way through 1992. The issue was pay television, and specifically giving existing commercial networks a stake of up to 45 percent in the new regime. Labor MPs certainly had problems with the policy – they saw alternative opportunities to diversify the concentrated media market – but also with the style of Keating's announcement of the policy, unilaterally, on Sunday morning television. Mike Steketee wrote, in this context, that

> In one sense, Keating 's pre-emptive strike on Sunday was not unusual. It was a classic way of asserting political leadership. What was different and what is causing intense frustration in the Caucus is that it overthrew an extensive process of consultation on a complex subject on the day before it was to go to Cabinet. As one Government MP put it yesterday, 'it is the antithesis of good government'[301].

Steketee saw the policy announcement as the end of the 'conciliatory Keating of the early days of his prime ministership' and the return of the 'combination of argument, bluff and intimidation which achieved so much for him as Treasurer'[302]. The same commentator opined that Keating had offered 'doubters in the Labor Caucus' a 'shit sandwich'[303].

The lesson from the pay television episode was that caucus was wary of provoking the Prime Minister into a debilitating brawl over the policy. The choice for backbenchers was to either endorse the PM's 'attempt to present it with a fait accompli' and 'damage Keating's leadership', or to 'succumb to what seems to many to be bad policy'[304]. The Labor caucus was torn between saving face for the Prime Minister less than a year from the upcoming election, and demonstrating the will of the Party room.

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[301] Mike Steketee, 'Keating Says Like It Or Lump It', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 1992, p 14.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.

Having survived the heat of the pay television policy conflict and then winning the 1993 election, Prime Minister Keating was faced with a more substantial and more damaging row with caucus over the make up of the 1993 budget. This represented a direct caucus challenge to the authority of the PM and his policy-making style. One caucus meeting[305] in particular – the 'Monday Night Massacre'[306] – was a brutal exchange of views that saw Keating get 'a smack in the face from the Labor Caucus'[307]. According to one credible commentator,

> the Monday night Caucus meeting was the Government's most openly hostile of its leader's behaviour since Labor came to office almost 11 years ago ... the very fact that as many as 66 Labor backbenchers turned up at the meeting, and 28 actually voiced their concerns, none in flattering terms, makes it obvious the meeting was much more than just a few malcontents letting off steam[308].

Labor MPs had challenged directly 'the Keating style of leadership and his management of the Government'[309].

The politics of the Government's 1993 budget were terrible, and created sharp divisions within the broader labour movement. But aside from the policy components of the budget, it was the process and lack of consultation 'that annoyed them most - the fact that the Caucus had been ignored and was still being ignored'[310]. The *Sun Herald*'s Bruce Jones wrote, during the conflict, that

> Through all the discussion about changes which the Caucus wanted made to the Budget there was a consistent sub-text: the fact that relations between the Government leadership and the rest of the Government had reached such a sorry state was Mr Keating's fault. He was governing almost as a political loner, taking advice from bureaucrats and a small group of advisers with little consultation with the wider ministry and virtually no consultation with the Caucus[311].

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[305] The meeting referred to here was actually a meeting of the caucus economic policy committee, heavily attended by Labor MPs. Keating had a speaking engagement at the ACTU at the same time as the next day's regular caucus meeting and so fronted the economic policy meeting to allow backbenchers the opportunity to discuss the budget with him.
[306] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Style Upsets His Team', *Sun Herald*, 5 September 1993, p 30.
[307] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating Must Face Reality', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 1993, p 4.
[308] Alan Ramsey, 'Bullets From a Wounded Soldier', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1993, p 31.
[309] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating Must Face Reality', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 1993, p 4.
[310] Alan Ramsey, 'Bullets From a Wounded Soldier', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1993, p 31.
[311] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Style Upsets His Team', *Sun Herald*, 5 September 1993, p 30.

Graham Richardson concurs that 'the caucus just went into a total revolt' because there wasn't a 'process that's involved everyone'[312].   Jones, after speaking with some caucus members, concluded that it was 'not just a question of [caucus] having more access to the Prime Minister, but of being taken seriously by him'[313]. There was some criticism that a group of backbenchers who presented Keating with 'at least a dozen recommendations for the Budget were listened to politely, but made virtually no impact'[314].   Adding insult to injury was the Prime Minister's insistence on praising crossbench senators for their role in the negotiation of the budget through the Senate, while caucus was largely ignored, at least before it protested loudly[315].

Prime Minister Keating's instinctive response to caucus dissent over the budget was to take backbenchers head on and publicly belittle their input.   One ABC radio exchange, chronicled by Alan Ramsey, is illustrative of Keating's initial response.   Commenting on the concerns raised by some backbenchers at the previous day's meeting of the economic policy committee meeting, the conversation went as follows:

> Those (MPs) who had sharp comments (to make to me at the meeting),' he went on, still speaking quietly and without rancour, 'either wanted to be in the ministry and missed out, or had been in the ministry and had been dropped out and had an axe to grind. Well, that is all right,' he said, getting to his feet and getting ready to leave. 'We all know about them. 'They are wounded soldiers. But,' he said, smiling for the first time, 'we will try and bind them up and make them happy.' And, with that, he gathered up his papers and strolled out, as unhurried and as languidly as ever. It was a wonderfully arrogant exit. Pure Keating. Two fingers, and up yours! I wouldn't have been a bit surprised if he'd turned at the door and added, 'And you can all get f—d!' because that's what I felt he'd really have liked to have told the press and his Caucus, too. Instead, he did so metaphorically[316].

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[312] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

[313] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Style Upsets His Team', *Sun Herald*, 5 September 1993, p 30.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating Must Face Reality', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 1993, p 4.   This criticism was often made in conjunction with a related concern that Keating listened to interest groups at the expense of the Labor caucus.   For an elaboration of this argument see David Burchell and Race Matthews, 'Introduction' in David Burchell and Race Matthews (eds) *Labor's Troubled Times* (Sydney, Pluto Press, 1991), pp 7-8; see also Stuart MacIntyre, 'Decline and Fall?' in David Burchell and Race Matthews (eds) *Labor's Troubled Times* (Sydney, Pluto Press, 1991).

[316] Alan Ramsey, 'Bullets From a Wounded Soldier', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1993, p 31.

In the context of caucus' legitimate concerns about the contents of the budget, Keating's response was extraordinary. But other acrimonious exchanges had also taken place at the Monday night meeting. In the midst of the battle, Peter Cleeland, a backbencher from Victoria, suggested Hewson had lost the 1993 election rather than Keating having won it. The Prime Minister reportedly responded with 'Pig's arse!' and then, according to Ramsey, that if 'Cleeland really believed the Opposition had lost the election rather than Labor having won it ... he had no business being a Labor member of Parliament'[317].

After these heated words inside the Party room and out, the Prime Minister was forced to make some changes to the original budget. It seems that Keating saw the changes as the result of Senate negotiations[318], rather than caucus pressure, with the exception of a rethink of the policy on pensioner's shareholdings[319]. There were, however, broader implications; one post-meeting report had Keating acknowledging 'the need to draw more people into the decision-making processes of government' and giving 'assurances about greater involvement for the Caucus'[320]. The episode, according to one anonymous Government backbencher, 'makes it possible for things to be said that were only said before in dark corners'[321]. Though the budget process of 1993 may have done little to change Keating, it nonetheless represents one of the most significant episodes where the caucus took Keating on, reminding him that some power resides within the walls of the Party room.

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[317] Ibid.
[318] See Liz Young, 'Minor Parties in the Legislative Process in the Australian Senate: A Study of the 1993 Budget', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 34, no 1, 1999, pp 7-27, for a thorough examination of the role of the minor parties in the negotiation of Labor's 1993 budget. This article is returned to in Chapter Six, below.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating Must Face Reality', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August 1993, p 4.
[321] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Style Upsets His Team', *Sun Herald*, 5 September 1993, p 30.

More than a year passed before caucus again flexed its muscles, this time over forestry policy and the issue of woodchipping licenses[322]. The fight apparently erupted publicly after Keating had ignored the more than 40 FPLP members who had written to him asking that caucus discuss the issue[323]. The issue reached its head when Lindsay Tanner, a Victorian MP and senior member of the parliamentary Left, foreshadowed a caucus motion heavily criticising the actions of David Beddall, the minister responsible for the decision, and calling for a tighter regime of forest protection. Tellingly, the motion also called for the reconstitution of the decision-making process so that future decisions on woodchip licences are made by Cabinet after consultation with Caucus'[324].

While caucus' ire was, in this instance, directed towards Minister Beddall, the fallout nonetheless involved repeated calls for greater caucus input into policy making, an issue that had been raised in the pay TV and 1993 budget cases examined above. Keating averted any further anger over woodchipping by making a conciliatory statement before the caucus meeting which was scheduled to discuss the issue[325]. This again demonstrated that caucus, carefully choosing when to take issue with the Prime Minister, could occasionally impact on the policy of the Government.

The final significant caucus clash with the Prime Minister took place over Keating's refusal to demand Carmen Lawrence stand aside during the damaging Royal Commission into the Penny Easton Affair. Caucus dissent, in this case, however, had absolutely no effect on the Prime Minister's steadfast determination to stand by the Health Minister[326]. Apparently many Labor MPs 'believed that Keating should have pulled rank and instructed Lawrence to stand

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[322] For a dispassionate and useful analysis of the issue see Department of the Parliamentary Library, *The woodchip licensing issue*, (Canberra, 1995); Maria Maley 2002, op cit, pp264-72 also analyses the fiasco, in some depth, from the adviser's point of view.
[323] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 131.
[324] Bruce Jones and Heath Gilmore, 'Chips Are Down as Beddall Faces Axe', *Sun Herald*, 15 January 1995, p 21.
[325] Caroline Milburn, 'Woodchip Statement Rekindles The Rage', *Age*, 28 January 1995, p 8.
[326] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 107.

aside until the royal commission was over'[327]. His refusal to do so, according to Pamela Williams, 'badly shook the confidence of many backbenchers'[328]. Nonetheless, Keating stood firm, inviting some extremely rare leadership speculation[329].

The conclusions we can draw from these examples of clashes between Prime Minister Keating and the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party are as follows: first, such occasions were extremely rare. This is illustrated by the fact that only a handful of issues were openly contested. Second, it appears that the problems related as much to a lack of caucus consultation as to the actual policy content, though this played a role. Third, and related to point two, is that issues of consultation and process arose more frequently after the 1993 election, and were more prominent in the final year of the Government.

Why Keating Dominated Caucus

Despite these occasional clashes, and rare opportunities for caucus to force a Prime Ministerial back down, Keating dominated and controlled the FPLP for four major reasons: there was never a significant threat of a leadership challenge, which may have softened his approach; the corporate timidity of the caucus in its dealings with the PM; the effect of Keating's role in winning the 'unwinnable' election of 1993; and the force of the Prime Minister's personality. These factors are examined here in turn and provide an explanation of Keating's ability to get away with an essentially isolated relationship with his parliamentary colleagues.

Only rarely did speculation over Keating's leadership tenure appear publicly. This is largely because the only viable alternative – Kim Beazley – was steadfast in his loyalty to the Prime Minister, and often ruled out categorically any challenge to his leader. This despite a short period late in 1995 where a Beazley challenge was

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[327] Ibid, p 109.
[328] Ibid, p 113.
[329] Ibid, p 114.

speculated upon, largely due to the result of the Canberra by-election and Keating's subsequent nonchalance. At about this time Don Watson was told that the PM 'would soon be toppled to make way for Beazley; that Barron was in league with Hawke on this and if Richo did not soon find some influence in our office he would join the putsch'[330]. John O'Callaghan, Beazley's senior adviser, recounted how 'there was a visit by some factional colleagues of Paul's from Sydney' who 'were concerned about their future'. The gist of the conversation, according to O'Callaghan, was that 'most of them could see it was going to be pretty difficult to win in 96' so they suggested 'Kim consider running against Paul. But Kim just scoffed at that. His loyalty to the leader was paramount to him'[331]. Kim Beazley's own words back this up; in September 1995 he declared 'the paramount chief' was 'completely secure'[332].

Aside from this brief period in 1995, which seems not to have been taken seriously by any of the major figures, Keating was remarkably secure in the leadership of the ALP[333]. Michael Lavarch, when asked if caucus ever really considered dumping Keating for Beazley or another alternative, told the author: 'no, not anything beyond five drinks in on a Thursday night, an end of session type conversation. He'd won an election that nobody thought we'd really win. So we gave him a go. And the trauma of the leadership spill to get him there, people weren't going to readily revisit that'[334]. Further, according to Geoff Walsh, caucus' judgement in the dying days of the Government was that challenging Keating was essentially counterproductive; that 'it was best to let him, as the leader, take the chances'[335].

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[330] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 431.
[331] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[332] Quoted in 'Sayings of the Week', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1995, p 24.
[333] The lack of any challenge to Keating was remarked upon by many of those consulted in the research for this thesis, including, for example, respected political commentator Paul Kelly and MPs Michael Lavarch and Mark Latham.
[334] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[335] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.

The second factor contributing to the Prime Minister's dominance of the Parliamentary Labor Party was the observable timidity of his colleagues. Episodes like the 1993 clash over the budget were rare, and had little lasting effect on the PM's mode of operation. Graham Richardson, in this context, felt that the 'real mistake that was made was that caucus flexed its muscles, bared its teeth, stared the cabinet down, and then retreated into its corner and never really did it again. It seems to me the timidity of the caucus, the cabinet and the Labor Party over the course of the next couple of years contributed to the result in 1996, because no one actually tried to stop Paul carrying on the way he was carrying on'[336].

A stark example of the timidity of the Labor caucus came in the dark aftermath of the Canberra by-election. Numerous sources testify that caucus was almost silent in Party forums on the need for a change in direction, while happy to anonymously background journalists on the need for change. Mark Baker, writing in the *Age* in April 1995, related how 'the argument that Keating is becoming more isolated is illustrated by the fact that while a clutch of MPs spoke publicly early this week about the need for a change of direction after the Canberra byelection result, only one spoke out during Tuesday's caucus meeting'[337]. Mark Latham MP concurs, telling the author that 'after the devastating Canberra by-election loss ... there probably was a bit of muttering that the show was out of touch and Paul's got to do something to reconnect the average person and break down some of the negative images that had built up about him. But nobody was standing up and saying that in the caucus'[338]. Caucus reluctance to challenge Keating other than on a handful of sporadic occasions created some problems for the Government, particularly in its final year. Ramsey argued in September 1995 that Keating

> is a prisoner of his own authority. So is the whole of the Government. Yet his colleagues sat by and let it happen. Nobody in the Caucus, the Cabinet or the full ministry denied him. They were content to leave Keating run the

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[336] In Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 270.
[337] Mark Baker, 'The Perils of Paul Keating's Challenge', *Age*, 1 April 1995, p 17.
[338] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.

> agenda however he saw fit. Now things have gone wrong they heap all the blame on him. Well, the responsibility is their's as much as his. And sneaking around the corridors, blowing in each other's ears and those of the vacuum cleaners in the Press Gallery, their usual lack of spine stiffened by the public aggrandising of political blowflies like Graham Richardson, isn't going to fix the problems. ... Caucus had its chance to say its piece on Tuesday. Yet while Keating spoke for a full 40 minutes, dampening down members' concerns, not a soul said anything to his face except NSW backbencher Bob Horne - and he was fairly circumspect. Everybody else went missing. So much for political courage, even against a leader wounded as Keating was a week ago[339].

In a separate article the same author commented that no one in the caucus 'challenges the Prime Minister to his face, even though they may shuffle their feet and make discreet rude noises behind his back'[340].

Like many aspects of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership, his relations with caucus were altered dramatically by the PM's stunning victory in the 1993 election[341], which left him with immense authority and influence over the Labor Party[342]. Latham commented that

> in those days Paul really had the great legitimising strength of winning the 93 election. He had a lot of the ideas of the 80s, early 90s the Government is on its knees, he gets the job, and wins the unwinnable election. So he was to some extent beyond challenge because of the greatness that he'd achieved electorally. To some extent this was a weakness of the Government, because I don't think it's healthy that someone's beyond challenge. But I'd say in the caucus Paul had as exalted position as any Labor leader has had.

Michelle Grattan agrees, writing that Keating was given unprecedented powers after the 1993 election[343]. And according to cabinet colleague Michael Lavarch, the 1993 election 'put a lot of authority with him, that win, additional authority'[344].

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[339] Alan Ramsey, 'Friend or Foe, PM Pays Out In Full', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1995, p 39.
[340] Alan Ramsey, 'Bald Priorities of the Keating Regime', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1995, p 15.
[341] See Chapter Eight 'Pressing the Flesh'.
[342] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.
[343] Powers to choose his ministry, for example. See 'Picking Winners' in Chapter Four; see also Michelle Grattan, 'Caucus and the Factions' in J Faulkner and S Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor* Party (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001), p 261; and Geoff Kitney, 'Change of Watch on Ship of State', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 1993, p 15.
[344] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.

The final factor in Prime Minister Keating's dominance of the FPLP came simply with his own forceful approach to governing. Though this effect is hard to quantify, as is the view that Keating could at times 'charm' caucus into following him, a convincing argument can be made that he bludgeoned caucus into submission. This view is supported by Geoff Kitney, who expressed the opinion in an interview that what made Keating 'powerful amongst colleagues was the force of his personality, the force of his intellect and his willingness to be quite brutal in the way he dealt with his colleagues'[345].

Prime ministerial power is relative to the influence and authority maintained by alternative sources of power such as the caucus. The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, under Prime Minister Keating, was largely bereft of power because it ceded the removal threat, was slow to voice its concerns, rewarded Keating after the 1993 election victory with unprecedented influence, including the almost unhindered selection of the ministry, and allowed itself to be put under Keating's spell. The leadership bargain in the Government's ranks for more than four years was thus heavily skewed in the Prime Minister's favour. Caucus became a largely irrelevant cheer squad, nullifying the key brake on prime ministerial power.

Factions

Factions are essentially parties within parties; groups of people who gather to pursue power, manipulate a party's democratic process, or pursue set policy objectives. Many alternative definitions of factions exist, though each describes groups that seek to gain influence or control over party processes, leadership selection and strategy[346].

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[345] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[346] See, for example, Zariski in BD Graham, *Representation and Party Politics*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1993), p 147; NK Nicholson, 'The Factional Model and the Study of Politics', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 3, 1972, p 292; FP Belloni and DC Beller (eds), *Faction Politics: Political Parties and Factionalism in Comparative Perspective*, (Santa Barbara, ABC-Clio, 1978), p 419.

The Australian Labor Party has a well-developed factional system, permeating from the Parliamentary Party right down into the local sub-branch structures and unions[347]. Contributors to two detailed studies of the Labor Party, edited in 1983 and 2000 by John Warhurst and Andrew Parkin, take into account the negative and positive aspects of factionalism, recognising their existence as both a potentially corrosive aspect of Party life as well as a valuable tool for institutionalised conflict resolution and healthy competition[348].

An excellent description of the factional system operating during the Keating Prime Ministership has been provided by senior cabinet minister Neal Blewett. In his acclaimed *Cabinet Diaries*, he writes:

> The factions are better seen as clans or tribes, grouped around factional leaders, with long histories of internal political co-operation, rather than as ideological groupings. Of course, the tribal leaders had to pay obeisance to certain shibboleths within each tribe, for example opposition to uranium mining within the left. But provided the leaders could secure offices and perks for the members of the tribe, the tribe would acquiesce in most ideological accommodations reached by the leaders of the factions[349].

A similarly realistic view of Labor factions describes a system where the 'primary focus is on the obligations of kinship. You look after your mates and allies, and smash your enemies'[350].

At the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party level, Rodney Cavalier has argued, factional leaders under Hawke and then Keating

> put in place a new form of Labor governance – a troika of Prime Minister, Cabinet and faction. The Prime Minister and Cabinet were going to be able to get on with running the country. In exchange the factions took it upon themselves to manage many of the issues of potential conflict and assumed the monopoly right to provide *and* to select every position from the Cabinet to a trip to Western Samoa[351].

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[347] See Andrew Parkin and John Warhurst (eds) *Machine Politics in the Australian Labor Party* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1983); and John Warhurst and Andrew Parkin (eds) *The Machine: Labor Confronts the Future* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2000).
[348] See, in particular, Andrew Parkin and John Warhurst, 'The Labor Party: Image, History and Structure' in John Warhurst and Andrew Parkin (eds) 2000, op cit, pp 37-9.
[349] Neal Blewett 1999, op cit, p 66.
[350] Geoffrey Barker, 'An Example of Labor's Decline Into Tribalism', *Age*, 19 May 1992, p 13.
[351] Michelle Grattan 2001, op cit, p 252.

The FPLP factional system during Paul Keating's tenure as leader comprised: the Right (the largest grouping, with 45 members in 1992); the Left (35 members in 1992); the Centre-Left (20 members) and a group of factional independents (10-strong in 1992). These numbers changed only slightly over the coming years.

The factional system was a key factor in the stability Paul Keating enjoyed as leader. This was a trend that began with Prime Minister Hawke and continued after the 1991 leadership change. John O'Callaghan argues that to understand the discipline of the Hawke and Keating governments you have to understand that factions were central to it'[352]. Though factions are often recognised as agents of conflict, an important and often-neglected aspect of their role is that of conflict *resolution*. Labor under Keating had perfected the use of factions to determine the positions and spoils of government.

While Hawke was by nature more consultative with the factions[353], Keating nonetheless paid some attention to keeping them content. For example, it was standard practice for Keating to ask senior factional operators within the FPLP for feedback on the Government's progress[354]. The factional system maintained a high level of importance, according to Graham Richardson, because, 'when you're dealing with cabinets and caucuses it's not just your average faction fight'[355].

However, the argument that Keating maintained a relationship with factional leaders is not accepted by all commentators. Ramsey, for example, argued that, by his appointment of adviser Tom Wheelright to a consultative role with the factions, Keating was diminishing their role in his Government. He wrote in 1994 that the 'factional organisers meet Wheelright every couple of weeks' whereas 'Hawke used to do this himself. It kept him in touch with backbench thinking and

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[352] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[353] See Mike Steketee 2001, op cit, p 156.
[354] Shaun Carney, 'Swooping Into Action', *Age*, 21 February 1995, p 9.
[355] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

concerns. Keating is less interested'[356]. Though whether or not Keating himself consulted factions or appointed a senior adviser to fill the role is somewhat insignificant. Appointing a key staffer to liaise with the factions can also be seen as Keating's way of attaching importance to the system, recognising the stability provided by the entrenched factional system. Indeed veteran MP Gordon Scholes even complained that Keating consulted the factions too much[357].

Paul Keating's relations with the caucus, like other aspects of the Prime Ministership, nonetheless went through ebbs and flows. Keating's deputy and senior Left operative, Brian Howe, recounts how the PM went 'through the stage of the one big faction, you know they're a drag on the Party and there are no real differences, it's all personalities, and we all ought to get rid of them and have one big faction'[358]. Later, again according to Howe, 'he's into the management of the factions, in a similar role to Hawke in that he talks to faction leaders. Prior to 93 he was more than reasonable'[359].

Prime Minister Keating's relationships with each of the major factions never reached a stage of open warfare, indeed the Government was bereft of any major factional clashes over policy or strategy. Nonetheless, and predictably, Keating's relationship with his own faction, the Right, was of the most significance. The PM's close working relationship with Graham Richardson, leader of the Parliamentary Right, and Richardson's effective partnership with Victorian Right faction heavyweight Robert Ray, ensured the Right maintained its dominance over strategy, input and positions allocated by caucus[360].

More particularly, the New South Wales component of the FPLP Right, counting Keating, Brereton and Richardson among its number, enjoyed a critical political

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[356] Alan Ramsey, 'Women Are Not Yet Equal To Mates', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 October 1994, p 39.
[357] Quoted in Blewett 1999, op cit, p 55.
[358] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[359] Ibid.
[360] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.

ascendancy[361]. Evidence of this ascendency was provided by Mike Steketee, who wrote in 1992 that the 'rewards of membership' of the Right

> at senior levels have never been greater than at present: Keating is Prime Minister, Graham Richardson a senior minister, Laurie Brereton an assistant minister, Stephen Loosley a senator and national ALP president, Leo McLeay, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Kerry Sibraa President of the Senate. It is a mix of talent, toughness and tribal loyalty which has got them there[362].

Though there was a significant degree of factional accommodation afforded the two other major groups, the Right maintained this ascendancy throughout.

Keating's relations with the Parliamentary Left, on the other hand, can be seen two ways: as the PM accommodating the Left; or as Left subjugation. Brian Howe, himself of the Parliamentary Left, related in an interview how Keating had significantly softened his relationship with that group, and had dropped the aggressive and combative approach he took to the pre-prime ministerial years of his political career[363]. Further, the Keating Government's policy stances were much more acceptable to the Left than those pursued (largely by Treasurer Keating) in the 1980s under Hawke. A quotation from a senior Left figure, explaining the situation, was that 'Paul used to urinate on us [the Left] from a great height in the past, dismissing the ideas he is now embracing'[364]. However, this is where the point about subjugation can be made. The pursuit of 'Left' policy did not mean that faction was necessarily more powerful. In this context, Grattan explained early in the Prime Ministership how 'For the Left, life under Paul Keating is a paradox. The Government is moving more strongly towards the Left's economic agenda than probably at any time in the last nine years. Yet the Left's leaders are less powerful than they were a few months ago'[365]. The argument about diminished Left influence was also made in an article composed mid-1995, with Keating's appointment of the Right's Kim Beazley as the

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[361] Alan Ramsey, 'The Mates Don't Win All The Time', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 1992, p 21.
[362] Mike Steketee, 'Sicilian Defence Backfires', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 April 1992, p 10.
[363] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[364] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating's Pragmatism Overlaps Left Heartland', *Age*, 8 February 1992, p 2.
[365] Ibid.

replacement for the Left's Brian Howe as Deputy Prime Minister, without consultation with the Left[366].

The Centre-Left was a smaller faction represented by significant players in the first Keating Government such as senior ministers Neal Blewett (Health), John Dawkins (Treasury) and John Button (Industry). Traditionally their influence extended beyond what pure 'numbers' would provide. During the Keating tenure, the Prime Minister's relationship with key Centre-Left figures was reasonable, according to Button, because 'after all they got him up as prime minister, he wouldn't have got up without them'[367]. In another interview, Blewett agrees:

> He didn't take us too seriously as factional operators, we were too amateur at factional politics. But he was close to the centre-left intellectually and the centre-left shared his policy perspectives. Dawkins was intellectually his closest colleague and he admired the policy skills of most of the centre-left ministers, and had an intellectual respect for them[368].

The significant cabinet input of the Centre-Left represented another aspect of Keating's accommodation of other groups, and the lessening of combative factional tension.

Conflict between the established factional groups within the Keating Government was relatively minor[369], largely because there was a policy convergence between Right and Left, and because some effort went into the management of the factional system. This provided Keating with a degree of caucus stability and a mechanism for resolving conflict when it did arise. With Keating's Right faction dominant but not domineering, the Prime Minister could get on with governing less hindered by factional machinations.

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[366] Padraic P. McGuinness, 'Keating's Domination Over The Left Is Now Complete', *Age*, 22 June 1995, p 12.
[367] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[368] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.
[369] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.

The Party Organisation

The relationship between a prime minister and the party organisation outside parliament can be advantageous or it can be fraught with difficulty and conflict. The organisation occupies it's own 'turf' and enjoys some autonomy within it's own spheres of influence, but is linked to, and shares with, the leader and the parliamentary party the aim of winning and maintaining government[370]. Both the party organisation and the leader possess important tools in the battle for influence. The prime minister's authority as leader of a government is balanced by the size and sophistication of the party organisation, which can exert influence on the caucus, and by its responsibility for campaigns and fundraising. In simple terms competition between the two wings of the party occurs over the exertion of relative influence over the entire party structure.

The Australian Labor Party is a federal structure headed by the National Secretariat, which houses the National Secretary (who is, simultaneously, Campaign Director) of the Party, and comprising branches in every state and territory. The relationship between Prime Minister Keating and the Labor machine, particularly the National Secretariat, was absolutely poisonous. There were no formal consultative mechanisms between the Office of the PM and the Party headquarters outside of campaign times, though there were some attempts at improving informal relations between staff[371]. The late Ian Henderson, Assistant National Secretary in the early years of the Keating Prime Ministership, told this author that 'Paul Keating had very little to do with the National Secretariat' and 'showed little interest in official Party activity'. The relationship was 'antagonistic as a whole because, in his view I suspect, the Party was backward-looking and hadn't been elected to Government like he'd been'[372]. Another explanation is that Keating's reliance on close, trusted advisers meant

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[370] See Glyn Davis 1992, op cit, p 75.
[371] Interview with Ian Henderson, 19 June 2002.
[372] Ibid.

those in the Secretariat, with their own power bases and independence, were treated with suspicion[373].

The relationship between Keating and the ALP National Secretariat was particularly fraught during the 1993 and 1996 federal election campaigns. In simple terms the problem on both occasions was that Keating wanted his office to run the campaign, and had little regard for the Secretariat or successive National Secretaries Bob Hogg and Gary Gray. Hogg was National Secretary in 1993 and the campaign director for that year's March election[374]. The clashes between Hogg and Keating were significant, and continued right throughout the campaign period. Michael Gordon attributes this to a personality clash between Keating the 'confidence player who kept information tight within his inner sanctum' and Hogg the 'realist who tended to be far more open and accessible'[375]. Don Watson's biography further describes the situation in 1993 thus:

> from the first day the relationship with the national secretariat turned dirty. There were bitter arguments and accusations of incompetence. The hardheads of the party like to get together with the hardheads of the press and nod sagely and mutter great oaths about what is Realpolitik – and so it was inevitable that the disputes would find their way into the newspapers. It was said that the Prime Minister's Office was trying to run the campaign as no campaign had ever been run, and yet the office was inexperienced; incompetent, arrogant and lacking battle-hardness, according to some 'senior cabinet members', one report said[376].

An event that seemingly constituted the final straw between the two men came when Hogg briefed the media days from the election, in collaboration with Queensland Premier Wayne Goss, that Keating was likely to lose[377]. Keating was furious, and the act represented the low point in an already distrusting

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[373] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002; see also Chapter Five 'Governing from the Centre'.

[374] Note that Chapter Eight 'Pressing the Flesh' deals in detail with the 1993 and 1996 elections. The concern here is with the relationship with the Party organisation, so broader campaign issues are left for that subsequent chapter.

[375] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 235; see also p 250.

[376] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 319.

[377] Interview with Bob Hogg, 4 September 2002.

relationship. Despite this, however, Bob Hogg still felt he enjoyed a more effective relationship with Keating than did his successor, Gary Gray[378].

Pamela Williams' book *The Victory*[379] is a valuable account of the disastrous relationship between Keating and Gray[380]. Relying primarily on detailed briefings from Gray himself, Williams concludes that their personalities and styles clashed heavily, and that the Prime Minister had an extremely low opinion of the capabilities of the Party organisation[381]. The theme of the entire campaign became 'the disintegration of the relationship between the Prime Minister and the party machine'[382]. One spectacular clash is recorded by Williams, where Keating reportedly told the National Secretary:

> I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Gary, I'll tell you what we'll do. I'm going to take the $12 million for the campaign and my office will spend it. That's what we'll do. And if you want to be part of this campaign, Gary, you'll do what we want you to do, and if you don't, you know what you can do? You know what you can do? I'll tell you what you can do. You can go to fucking Cooma and you can hand out fucking how-to-vote cards for Jim Snow in Cooma. That's what you can do, Gary'[383].

In this climate of two-way frustration during the 1996 campaign, and with the obviously looming defeat, it is clear that the friction between Gray and Keating prevented a more effective Labor campaign[384].

Though the relationship between Keating and the Party organisation was never optimal, it deteriorated badly after the 1993 election and with the promotion of Gary Gray to the primary organisational post of National Secretary, despite the suggestion that the Prime Minister preferred Ian Henderson to fill the role. Apparently there 'there was nothing Keating could have done to stop' Gray winning the role, 'even had he sought to do so'[385]. Bob Hogg suggests Gray

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[378] Ibid.
[379] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit.
[380] Gary Gray was approached for an interview on multiple occasions but declined, so we rely on the detailed account he provided Pamela Williams.
[381] See, for example, Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, pp 31-2.
[382] Williams 1997, 'Behind the Victory', op cit, p 102.
[383] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 146.
[384] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 700.
[385] Alan Ramsay, 'Number Cruncher's Colourful Rise', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 May 1993, p 25.

found it difficult to 'get to a status where he could be listened to', and that he 'sometimes could have reacted a bit more subtly to things', though 'in the main he was the aggrieved party'[386]. All of these factors no doubt contributed to the poor PM-Secretary relationship, though two more significant factors – the effect of the 1993 election win and the systemic problem of campaign organisation – warrant further consideration.

It can be argued that Paul Keating's election victory in 1993 gave him additional authority and influence over the Party, but it also damaged relationships with the National Secretariat for a number of reasons. First, according to Williams, the PM 'would never trust the party machine again, and he busied himself settling scores with those who had doubted his ability to win'[387]. Further, the 'result of 1993 was that the prime minister would have nothing to do with the Labor Party machine in the 1996 election. He was not interested in advice, strategy or co-operation. In 1996 he planned to do it all himself, trusting very few in the party outside his office'[388]. On the other side of the ledger, Party staff were angered when the Prime Minister pointedly refused to thank the National Secretariat in his victory speech on the night of the 1993 poll[389]. According to one Party officer, 'Keating's take-out from it all was that he and his advisers were right and the machine people were dickheads'[390].

Mark Ryan recalls in the aftermath of the 1993 election a problem relating to Gary Gray's clout with the Labor leader, and the Party organisation's willingness to articulate problems without necessarily offering solutions. He believes 'Keating became frustrated at hearing the mantra from head office that we had to do this or we had to do that, Keating had to suddenly become more lovable or

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[386] Bob Hogg interviews, 4 and 5 September 2002.
[387] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 33. Ian Henderson, a key National Secretariat staffer in 1993, related to this author how there was a range of views in the Party organisation about whether Keating could win that election. If Henderson's recollection is correct, Keating's belief that the officers had written him off is unfounded. Interview with Ian Henderson, 19 June 2002.
[388] Pamela Williams 1997, 'Behind the Victory', op cit, p 104.
[389] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 32.
[390] In ibid, p 37.

whatever' but the 'advice or the ideas were pretty thin on the ground coming from the national office, frankly, in those days'. Further, while 'the office was highly regarded in terms of its organisational and campaigning on the ground skills', 'Gary walking up the hill to have a discussion with Keating about how to blend the economic imperatives with the political strategy was just never going to happen'. The source of the problem was that 'trying to pretend that Gary Gray and Paul Keating were on a level, were equals, discussing and debating high strategy, was never going to happen'[391]. A status problem existed between a recently legitimised and dominant Prime Minister, and a National Secretary, new in the job, who Keating did not really want appointed in the first place.

The primary factor, however, in the woeful Keating-Gray and, by extension, the PMO-National Secretariat relationship, was the fundamental issue of who actually ran the election campaign. This issue was neatly summed up by the Prime Minister in a letter he wrote to Gray in the dying days of the 1996 campaign. Keating wrote 'I cannot have a position where my instincts as party leader run for three years but not the last week of the election campaign, to be held back by an ad agency or focus group advice'[392]. This view is confirmed by comments made by the most senior Keating staffer, Don Russell, who told this author that

> There is a fundamental structural problem in the way the campaign is set up, because you have a situation where the prime minister, or basically the leader, runs the debate, runs the relationship with the media, runs the strategy, runs everything, nine-tenths of the three years that you're there. And there's a strange situation that happens during the election campaign, where the leader continues to be the leader, and the whole focus of the campaign is on him or her, but the actual advertising is suddenly, and the structured message making and control, suddenly devolves to the Party Secretary[393].

Then specifically, in relation to Gray,

> We have a Party Secretary who doesn't really, whose strengths and abilities aren't necessarily those to run an advertising campaign. But then suddenly the most fun they ever have is when they spend something like 15 million dollars. This is the high point of their life, and they have total control over

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[391] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[392] Quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 327.
[393] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.

> everything. They pay the cheques, they've spent the last nine months working very closely with whoever is putting the ads together, putting together the strategy and thinking it all through. Then you have a prime minister who is trying to tell a story to the nation, and who would like to think that the paid advertising is actually in sync with what he's trying to say. Common sense suggests there should be some link between the message that's coming out of the paid advertising and what's actually being said by the Party leader. But we have this very strange situation with two heads[394].

Russell's final point was that, given the circumstances, where 'it was pretty clear that Keating was going to lose', 'he was entitled to say look, if we're going to have a go, let's do it my way'[395].

Though there were attempts to rectify and circumvent the poisonous relationship between the two main protagonists, little was achieved. Gray began inviting the entire cabinet to briefings at the National Secretariat[396], trusted Keating confidante Seamus Dawes acted as a liaison between the two men[397], and Gray attended some meetings with Russell at Parliament House[398]. Little headway was made, and the aftermath of the 1996 election saw much finger pointing in both directions.

Other relationships with Party units pale in significance compared to the poor interactions between Keating and the Party Secretariat. Even National Conference, traditionally an important forum for policy development outside of the Parliamentary Party room, was greatly diminished during the Keating Prime Ministership. The event was largely stage-managed and free of significant policy brawls[399]. Even the defeat in 1994 of Keating's preferred uranium mining policy was greeted with a shrug by the PM, who declared that 'if he'd really wanted a change, he could have got it, but there was no great need, economically or politically, to really fight'[400]. Thus even a rare Prime Ministerial defeat at the

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[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 71.
[397] Ibid, pp 77-8.
[398] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[399] See Mike Seccombe, 'A Passionless Stage-Managed Event', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 1994, p 8.
[400] Mark Baker, 'Twas a Time to Stand Firm', *Age*, 1 October 1994, p 6.

hands of the Party did not attract great interest[401]. So, rather than representing the power of the Party to make policy, the episode instead demonstrated the irrelevance of the Party organisation to Keating's operation.

What are the consequences for a Prime Minister such as Paul Keating who endured such terrible relations with his Labor Party's chief campaign and fundraising unit? For Keating, the costs were probably electoral, though the number of seats sacrificed to the rivalry is impossible to quantify. But the conclusion that can be drawn is that, because the National Secretariat has its own power resources, not least of which is the spending of campaign dollars on advertising, for example, a Prime Minister can not call all of the shots, and must be willing to work with the Party organisation. That Keating was not prepared to do this is a reflection of personality clashes and the fallout after the 1993 election he was expected to lose. Much stress was spent on the relationship, and there were few rewards. Keating's dominance of Party did not extend to the National Secretariat, and no method of avoiding the continuing conflict was ever found.

The Trade Union Movement

Trade unions are an integral component of the existence and operation of labour parties. The institutional arrangement is such that unions and their leaders possess significant power resources within parties with which they are affiliated. To Pelinka, 'unions were and are the most important economic association, the most important organization of any kind with which it shares a relationship of reciprocal sustenance and influence'[402]. The divide between the unions and labour parties can also be blurred, so that personnel, finances and policies are shared. The relationship can be constructive, with benefits for both sides, though

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[401] See Geoff Kitney, 'PM's Ambush in the Pokies Sets Bill Right', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 1994, p 8.
[402] A Pelinka *Social Democratic Parties in Europe* (New York, Praeger, 1999), p 105.

tensions inevitably arise 'between two institutions dealing in power and influence'[403].

In the Australian Labor Party trade unions have always had a strong, institutionalised presence. Through the provision of funds, advice and foot soldiers, and participation in factional activity and policy development, unions and the ALP are closely inter-linked. In the 1980s and early 1990s, throughout the Hawke and Keating governments, the central tenet of the relationship was the Accord, an agreement reached between the Government and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) trading wage restraint for improvements in the 'social wage'. Personal linkages between the ALP and the unions such as the close rapport struck up by Paul Keating and the ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty, plus the number of political representatives drawn from the union movement itself[404], create important ties that bind industrial labour and political Labor in Australia. All of this means ALP leaders must accommodate the wishes of the trade union movement or find ways to persuade.

Paul Keating's relationship with the unions is best viewed through the prism of his close relationship with the Secretary of the ACTU, Bill Kelty. Kelty was a colossal figure in the Australian labour movement, a close friend of the Prime Minister, and a key contributor to the policy architecture of the Keating Government (see below). Though this relationship eventually soured in 1995, it remained the key organisational influence on the Government's interaction with the ACTU. Here the role and influence of the unions on the Keating Prime Ministership is addressed in the context of campaign support in 1993, fall-outs and perceived betrayals, and the Keating-Kelty relationship.

Labor and Paul Keating were assisted greatly by the union movement during the 1993 campaign. Though unions can always be expected to assist their political

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[403] J Piazza, 'De-Linking Labor: Labor Unions and Social Democratic Parties under Globalization', *Party Politics*, vol 7, no 4, 2001, pp 413-35.
[404] Shaun Carney, 'Industrial Mates System Tests Friends', *Age*, 21 December 1994, p 6.

colleagues during election time, the extent of the assistance in 1993, from available accounts, was greater than usual. This was spurred on by the very real prospect of a Coalition Government whose policies, such as a Goods and Services Tax (GST) and a union-diminishing industrial relations agenda, would be detrimental to union members[405]. For senior unionist and member of the ACTU and ALP National Executives, Helen Creed, 'The thing that stands out in 1993 is the closeness of the strategy of Labor and the trade union movement'[406]. This closeness, and role of the unions in the election victory, is summed up neatly by Shaun Carney, who wrote

> When hardly anyone believed that Labor could win last year's federal election, it was the union movement that refused to give up, spending more than $2 million on a campaign against the coalition's industrial policy. The union campaign, coordinated by an ACTU official and now Labor Senate candidate, Ms Jennie George, played a crucial role in not only returning the ALP but restoring its previously crumbling support in working-class areas[407].

It was reasonable to expect, given this degree of cooperation and assistance, that newly re-elected Prime Minister Keating had accumulated a substantial debt to Australian unions.

However, very soon after the 1993 victory, Keating delivered a speech to the Institute of Directors that would send shockwaves through the union movement. The speech was penned by PMO adviser John Edwards and dealt with the Government's proposals regarding the expansion of enterprise bargaining, a policy not conducive to the objectives of the ACTU. One of Edwards' colleagues called it 'basically as close a statement you could get to Coalition policy'[408]. The announcement marked 'the death of nearly a century of centralised wage-fixing' and the 'dawn of the era of decentralised enterprise bargaining'[409]. One result was that

> ACTU vice-president, Mr George Campbell, was moved to warn last Sunday that non-union enterprise bargaining could badly fracture the unity of

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[405] Interview with Helen Creed, 20 September 2002.
[406] Ibid.
[407] Shaun Carney, 'Industrial Mates System Tests Friends', *Age*, 21 December 1994, p 6.
[408] Off the record conversation with a senior PMO adviser.
[409] Geoffrey Barker, 'ALP, Unions Contemplate Life After Separation', *Age*, 31 July 1993, p 1.

political and industrial labor. Mr Campbell's view followed more cautious expressions of concern by the ACTU president, Mr Martin Ferguson and the secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, and the ACTU executive decision opposing the opening of enterprise bargaining for non-unionists. Their concerns are now so widely spread across the Labor Party and the union movement that the potential consequences of a breach between political and industrial labor are being quietly canvassed by people in all industrial and political Labor factions[410].

The conflict over enterprise bargaining represented the first of a series of clashes which characterised the Labor-labour relationship under Keating, but also the most enduring source of disaffection. Don Watson called the speech a 'slow-acting poison: for the next three years it sat there like an abscess on the brain of the old alliance, draining it of vigour and erupting every now and then with awful consequences'[411]. Other policy issues with which unions took exception, recalls Helen Creed, were privatisation and deregulation, agendas to which Keating was inextricably linked[412].

The sense of betrayal felt by union leaders after the monumental campaign effort of early 1993 was also exhibited during the waterfront strike of 1994 over the issue of Government policy on the Australian National [shipping] Line (ANL). Capturing the sentiment of the clash, one journalist was prompted to write that members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)

> were the foot soldiers of the campaign, doing the tedious work of letter-boxing the electorates and revving up their mates to put Labor back in power. It was something Paul Keating was bluntly reminded of on Monday night as he convened a round-table meeting in his prime ministerial conference rooms at Parliament House with his senior Cabinet ministers, MUA officials and the ACTU, to thrash out an agreement to put an end to the crippling, five-day waterfront strike. The MUA had called an indefinite strike over the Government's policy on the Australian national shipping line, ANL Ltd, which it believed left open the way for the line to be dismantled and sold off to foreign interests. The union had done Mr Keating a favour at the last election and now they expected one in return. Instead, they believed, they had been given a kick in the guts[413].

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[410] Ibid; see also Brad Norington, 'Paul Isn't Playing Us Like a Symphony', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September 1993, p 5.
[411] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 369.
[412] Interview with Helen Creed, 20 September 2002.
[413] Mark Riley, 'Unions Steer Their Ship Back On Course', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 1994, p 34.

This clash is illustrative of the difficult relationship Keating and the unions shared; one which the words suspicion and betrayal were often used to describe[414].

Another source of friction was Keating's choice of long-time friend and political accomplice, Laurie Brereton, as Minister for Industrial Relations. Brereton was never popular with the ACTU or with the broader union movement[415], which placed great strains on the Prime Minister's already testy relationship with the unions. The combined effect of policy decisions such as enterprise bargaining, the waterfront strike, privatisation and deregulation, the 1993 campaign debt the unions felt wasn't repaid by the PM, and the appointment of Brereton combined to ensure Keating-union relations were never smooth sailing.

The Labor Government's relationship with the trade union movement endured these conflicts largely because of the close relationship between the leaders of the two wings of the labour movement; Keating and Bill Kelty. In this context Don Watson wrote that the Kelty 'relationship with Keating was built on hard-earned mutual respect and genuine affection. There were times when they seemed to delight in each other's company – they had nothing in common except the big picture and the ideas that comprised it[416]. Three other senior advisers and a key union official confirmed to this author the closeness of the relationship. Bruce Chapman described it as a 'two-part harmony'[417]; Mark Ryan called them 'intellectual equals' with a 'sense of the shared mission between the two of them'[418]; Don Russell remembered how Kelty could always get hold of Keating, and would always have an input into policy[419]. Various other commentators saw Kelty as the closest thing Australia has had to an unelected cabinet minister[420].

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[414] See, for example, Brad Norington, 'Keating and Unions: Cracks in Labor Unity', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 October 1994, p 20.

[415] Interview with Helen Creed, 20 November 2002; see also Shaun Carney, 'Industrial Mates System Tests Friends', *Age*, 21 December 1994, p 6.

[416] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 163.

[417] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

[418] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.

[419] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.

[420] See Shaun Carney, 'A Testing Time For Mates in the ALP', *Age*, 18 January 1992, p 1.

The Keating-Kelty relationship afforded both men great power, but was built first and foremost on their individual dominance of their own domains. Both enjoyed strong control; Keating over the Labor Government; Kelty over the ACTU. Because each could speak authoritatively for their sphere of influence, the relationship could afford to be top-down and deals could be stitched up at the highest level, free from long consultative pressures. Therefore, the Prime Minister profited from Kelty's dominance of the unions, which led one interviewee to comment that the latter 'was such a prominent and dominant figure within the union movement... if you got on the wrong side of Kelty you suffered'[421]. In some cases the closeness of the relationship and the bi-lateral approach to decision making attracted some criticism, for example from Brad Norington, who wrote that 'it had become too obvious lately that private phone calls and secret deals in backrooms - chiefly between these two men - have become the norm'. The Accord had reached the point where 'deals intended originally to reflect a democratic style of wide consultation are routinely tied up ahead of official negotiations by Paul Keating and Bill Kelty with little outside input', and then Kelty 'sells the deal to senior trade union officials as a fait accompli'. Norington continued:

> The problem for the political process of the Accord is that it no longer has any proper checks and balances as Mr Kelty increasingly gets his own way and Mr Keating relies on his mate to deliver. From all this, Mr Kelty has emerged foremost a politician, a man caught between looking after his union constituency and doing whatever is necessary to retain Labor's hold on office. ... His inner circle of union lieutenants is ever narrowing. He often works without need for them when he has direct access to Mr Keating , now as Prime Minister[422].

The relationship between Labor Government and peak union body became, in effect, a two-man show in which the leaders, Keating and Kelty, wielded enormous power.

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[421] Interview with Helen Creed, November 2002.
[422] Brad Norington, 'When Kelty Speaks, Keating Listens', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March 1992, p 11; see also Brad Norington, *Jennie George* (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1999).

The close relationship between the two men was not to endure beyond a fiery dispute, originally between the union movement and the mining giant CRA, which became a watershed moment in the deterioration of relations between the Government and the ACTU. Keating intervened in the original dispute in order to head off a costly strike on the country's waterfront on the eve of his keynote speech to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) on free trade[423]. After intense negotiation, much from telephones in Tokyo, Keating twice arrived at what he had been led to believe was acceptable to employers and the ACTU, only to have the conditions for a settlement altered substantially by Kelty. Then came the bitter blow to Keating and the final act of the relationship with Kelty's appointment of Keating's mortal enemy, former PM Bob Hawke, as union advocate. Commenting on the shocking development, Don Watson wrote that 'No greater violence could have been done to the world as we understood it an hour before', and 'It was like watching an earthquake or a divorce'[424]. Another senior adviser said the incident 'broke Keating's heart'[425]. That Keating was kept in the dark about the impending appointment made things even more difficult for Keating to accept[426]. Other issues were also at play in the fallout[427] between Keating and Kelty, but the appointment of Hawke signalled the end of a remarkable double act, with far reaching consequences for the Government, the ALP and the unions.

Labor prime ministers are forced to negotiate and occasionally compromise with a union movement which enjoys such a privileged position of power in the Australian Labor Party. A long history of coexistence – encompassing cooperation and conflict – gives unions enormous influence in the activities of the Party and

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[423] For a more complete chronology of the dispute and its fallout see Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 655-61.

[424] Ibid, p 661.

[425] Off the record conversation with senior Keating aide.

[426] For further analysis of the issue see Shaun Carney, 'State of the Union – Dispute Puts the Spotlight on Kelty-Keating Double Act', *Age*, 21 November 1995, p 11; Alan Ramsey, 'When Two Faces Are Better Than One', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November 1995, p 17; Alan Ramsey, 'Beazley Buoys a Leaden Labor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1995, p 33.

the policies of the Government. Keating was frequently at odds with the unions, but could get away with this because of his unusually close professional relationship with Bill Kelty, a dominant leader of the ACTU who could guarantee outcomes conducive to the agendas the two men agreed upon. With the bitter end to this relationship came a breakdown in the Government's links to the unions, and the 1996 election campaign saw only shadows of the unions' contribution to the 1993 poll. Keating controlled the unions largely by the grace of Kelty. When it was over, the policy tensions were all the more likely to damage this key industrial-political partnership.

Leading Labor

The leadership bargain struck between Prime Minister Paul Keating, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and the broader ALP, including the trade unions and the Labor organisation, was skewed dramatically in the Prime Minister's favour. His lack of consultation was mostly tolerated, with some rare exceptions, and he was granted the freedom to choose his own ministry in 1993[428]. Keating's relationship with the National Secretariat was more complicated, though; the contest for influence and authority ended in a stalemate detrimental to both parties but did not directly threaten Keating's tenure.

Malcolm Fraser, as analysed by Patrick Weller, was a similarly powerful party leader, but one who dominated through inclusion and consultation. He was a careful cultivator of an effective relationship with his Liberal Party. Weller records how Fraser consulted the party because he thought a united party would be important to his success as Prime Minister[429]. His caucus colleagues could usually see the Prime Minister with one or two days notice, confidential written notes were tolerated, and groups of backbenchers were occasionally invited to

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[427] For example the lingering effects of the enterprise bargaining speech in 1993 and the Government's refusal to actively promote Kelty's regional policy *Developing Australia*. In relation to the latter see Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 438-9.

[428] See Chapter Four 'Managing the Ministry'.

[429] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 149.

dine at the Lodge[430]. The caucus could force a rethink of cabinet decisions, Fraser always attended party meetings when available, and a system of policy committees gave backbenchers some say in policy development[431]. The Liberal Party machine also enjoyed significant influence, based primarily on Fraser's close relationship with Tony Eggleton, which included input into Question Time briefings[432]. All of this effort, though time consuming, meant Fraser could keep the party reasonably united behind his leadership. As this chapter has demonstrated, Keating's brand of party leadership could hardly have been more different to Fraser's approach.

The lessons from this comparison are that there is more than one way to control and lead a party as prime minister. Part of the explanation for this comes from personal style; Keating was never likely to be a consultative PM so his dominance of the ALP had to come from alternative approaches to leadership. The basic task confronted by the two prime ministers was also different because of the different types of parties they led. Fraser, for example, never had to deal with an affiliated trade union movement.

Within the Labor Party, Keating's approach to Party leadership also differed markedly from that of Bob Hawke, who enjoyed a more open and accessible relationship with his caucus, and a friendlier alliance with the Party organisation. His power arose from his electoral success and the warm approval of the electorate, as well as his willingness to mix socially with colleagues and make himself available for discussions with backbenchers. Hawke's Party leadership was different again to Keating's and, also, dissimilar to the approach taken by Malcolm Fraser. Party leadership thus depends on personal style and the utilisation of the various power resources a political party makes available to prime ministers.

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[430] Ibid, pp 149-54.
[431] Ibid, pp 154-61.
[432] Ibid, pp 164-8.

This chapter has demonstrated that Prime Minister Keating dominated his Party due to a number of interrelated factors. Winning the 1993 election against the odds gave him unprecedented powers and left his leadership safe and, largely, unquestioned by caucus. His personal take-no-prisoners approach also contributed to his dominance of the Party, as did the stability and conflict resolution prowess of the organised factional system, within which the groups had ceased fighting to the death over policy and position. Caucus never really considered an alternative to Keating, which negated the potential power of the removal mechanism. Finally, the Prime Minister's relationship with Bill Kelty, who could guarantee outcomes from the Australian Council of Trade Unions, was close enough to ensure the unions were kept on side for the majority of the Prime Ministership. In all of these respects, Keating enjoyed the necessary preconditions for successful party leadership. Most notably for this dissertation, interactions with the Labor caucus were coloured by a significant amount of collective subservience and the granting of much Prime Ministerial latitude. As a result, the leadership bargain, for four and a quarter years, was skewed remarkably in his favour, with positive and negative consequences.

4

Controlling Cabinet

I don't believe in aimless meetings where I sit mum trying to let a consensus develop for fear of showing my hand. That I reject as a style of leadership[433].

Cabinet is the focal point of traditional conceptions of Westminster executive government. Its role is best described as a decision-making body relying on collective effort, chaired and guided by the prime minister. In Bagehot's famous words, it is 'a hyphen which joins, a buckle which fastens, the legislative part of the State to the executive part of the State'[434]. Successful cabinets give coherence and legitimacy to decisions taken by the executive as a group, or a prime minister alone. Much can be learned from the power relations flowing both ways between ministers and the leader. Prime ministers cannot operate far removed from cabinet though they can dominate and direct its proceedings. In this sense, Weller describes a cabinet system in which the actions of a prime minister are 'overlaid on a cabinet system, not discrete from it'[435]. Keating and Weller similarly describe cabinet *government* rather than the *institution* of cabinet 'because, while many of the crucial decisions are taken around the cabinet table, others are made in its environs as part of the cabinet process: by the prime minister alone or with a group of senior ministers; in bilaterals between the minister and the prime minister; or by cabinet committees'[436]. Prime ministers navigate cabinet colleagues, inside the cabinet room and outside it, but enjoy the substantial power resources that leadership brings.

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[433] Paul Keating quoted by Geoffrey Barker, 'A Juggler in Full Flight', *Age*, 4 June 1993, p 17.
[434] Quoted in Michael Keating and Patrick Weller 2000, op cit, p 45.
[435] Patrick Weller, 'Prime Ministers, Political Leadership and Cabinet Government', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol 50, no 2, 1991, pp 131-44; see also Patrick Weller, 'Prime Ministers in Cabinet' in Patrick Weller (ed), *Menzies to Keating: The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992).
[436] Michael Keating and Patrick Weller, 2000, op cit, p 45.

Cabinet government is the ideal type to which presidential or individual leadership is often contrasted. In Australia the formal rules for cabinet are set out in the *Cabinet Handbook*, which outlines in detail the organisation of cabinet, conventions and principles, consultation, preparation of documents, minutes, and security[437]. Within these formal frameworks prime ministers determine how cabinet actually operates. They can consult cabinet, they can dominate it, or they can do both[438]. PMs possess significant power resources which make dominance over cabinet possible: they set the agenda for cabinet, chair the meetings and have final say on the matters considered by the group. More broadly, they have input into the make-up of the cabinet and the wider ministry. In addition, it is increasingly rare for a leader to be rebuffed on a specific issue, because the rebuttal of a PM effectively represents a show of no confidence in her or his leadership.

Some aspects of collective cabinet government, however, remain. Most major issues still go to cabinet, even if only for a decision to be legitimated by the group. Ministers, and particularly senior cabinet ministers, have their own significant power bases, scope for patronage, policy domains and interests. As Weller argues, they have 'the potential to wield power', and can 'limit the prime minister's power – if they choose to try, if they have the capacity, if they have the support'[439]. Cabinet comprises 'powerful and ambitious individuals' who 'need to be managed and handled with care'[440], so a prime minister must be skilful at directing the process without offending key colleagues and rivals.

When Paul Keating took the prime ministership in December 1991 he promised a greater *esprit de corps* among cabinet ministers and meaningful opportunities for cabinet discussion and debate[441]. Early in his tenure, he described himself as a

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[437] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Cabinet Handbook*, (Canberra, AGPS, 1994).
[438] See Patrick Weller 1989, op cit.
[439] Ibid, p 59.
[440] Ibid, p 108.
[441] This sentiment appeared publicly after Keating's early press conferences, and private conversations with ministers such as Graham Richardson and Brian Howe reaffirmed the PM's

traditional 'first among equals' type of leader. He argued that, because he had been part of the cabinet since 1983, his colleagues felt they could engage him more comfortably in that forum, in contrast to the situation under Bob Hawke. Keating saw himself as a 'rank and file, parliamentarian cabinet minister'[442]. From the outset, it seems, the Prime Minister attached great importance to the cabinet process, and appeared willing to include his senior colleagues in the major policy decisions of the Labor Government.

Paul Keating delivered on aspects of this promise; for example ministers describe an initially less domineering and more tolerant cabinet chair then they could have expected after Keating's forceful Treasury days. His relationship with cabinet and the wider ministry, however, largely reflected his personal avoidance of extensive consultation, though senior ministers could access the Prime Minister when circumstance and policy prerogatives allowed. Various aspects of Keating's relationships are examined in this chapter: input into the election of the ministry; the management of resignations and dismissals; his chairing style and performance in cabinet meetings; criticisms of his commitment to the cabinet process; the degree of access bestowed on senior colleagues; and prime ministerial incursions into the policy domains of other ministers. The emphasis throughout is on determining whether or not Keating dominated the process, and the extent to which he was forced to consult with, and defer to, ministerial colleagues. From this analysis we will get a valuable and recent assessment of the prime ministerial power debate.

Prime Minister Keating was an accommodating cabinet chair but never a consultative leader in the context of the broader cabinet system. This is especially so after the 1993 election victory, which gave him unprecedented authority to essentially choose his ministry, a development that ran counter to the traditions of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party. Cabinet discussion could be

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objective to restore cabinet camaraderie; interviews with Richardson (24 June 2002) and Howe (12 June 2002).
[442] Quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 223.

robust, but the leader's view in meetings prevailed. Continuing criticism of Keating's commitment to the process was aired publicly and privately. His chairing style was inclusive, though long-winded discussions were not tolerated. The Prime Minister did not convene semi-formal kitchen cabinets, though a small handful of privileged cabinet ministers could access Keating and were listened to when the political situation or policy direction warranted it. Finally, there was some intrusion into ministerial policy domains, but only in those areas in which the Prime Minister had a strong personal interest[443].

Paul Keating dominated cabinet because to publicly repudiate him would be an unthinkable course of action given the ramifications for his leadership, and because he was given enormous latitude after the 1993 election. In this respect, the preconditions for caucus domination, analysed in detail in the previous chapter, carry over into his control of the cabinet process. Prime Minister Keating dominated colleagues; in the context of cabinet's operation he did so as a result of personal force and a compliant, handpicked ministry who tolerated his propensity to occasionally bypass the cabinet process and announce initiatives unilaterally. Cabinet consultation occurred during the Keating Prime Ministership at the behest of the leader, it was not forced upon an authoritative leader by a powerful ministry. Cabinet government was not an approach encouraged under his tenure; it was a *Keating* Government firmly in the evolving tradition of prime ministerial power.

Picking Winners

Relations between the prime minister and her or his cabinet and broader ministry are personal as well as institutional, which makes the composition of the executive vital to the functioning of the government and to the effort leaders are required to exert in order to maintain effective relationships. The composition of the Keating ministries is provided in Appendix Two. From this list we see that

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[443] For example communications policy, the republic, the Accord.

Paul Keating initially inherited many of the ministers who had reached cabinet status during the Hawke Governments. This group included powerful men accustomed to the influence that ministerial rank provides, for example John Button and Neal Blewett. Once this long-serving cast started to retire, Prime Minister Keating was presented with frequent opportunities to reshuffle the cabinet and broader ministry, and bring in new talent loyal to the leader but without the collective experience of the cabinets of the 1980s. With the accumulation of loyalty through patronage came a more subservient and less questioning cabinet. In this context, the constraints and opportunities for influence afforded the Prime Minister over the selection of his ministry are analysed.

Prime ministers cannot unilaterally impose their will on the selection of a ministry; even Liberal Party leaders who formally appoint their own ministries at least informally take into account a number of factors such as gender, geography and seniority. Labor prime ministers are traditionally provided with a ministry elected by caucus, to which the leader allocates portfolios, making unilateral appointment even more difficult. Other impinging factors include previous deals done and the accommodation of the ALP's rigid factional system. People with significant power bases must be consulted; in Keating's case he usually consulted figures such as Brian Howe, Nick Bolkus and John Faulkner from the Left[444], Peter Cook and John Dawkins from the Centre-Left, and Robert Ray, Laurie Brereton and Graham Richardson from the Right[445].

The constraints of consultation and other considerations are examined here in more detail in the context of the ministerial reshuffles of the Keating Prime Ministership, namely the major opportunities presented by the change of leadership in 1991, the first resignation of Graham Richardson in 1992, the election victory of 1993, the replacement of Treasurer Dawkins early in 1994, and the appointment of a new Deputy Prime Minister in 1995. From this analysis

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[444] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.

we see significant scope for Keating to influence appointments to the ministry and cabinet, still inhibited by deals, factions, and other factors, but nonetheless increasingly able to surround himself with a handpicked selection of colleagues.

The first Keating ministry represented stability, rather than change, after the tumult of the leadership challenge. John Dawkins replaced Ralph Willis as Treasurer, the latter returning to Finance. Alan Griffiths and Bob Collins were elevated to a cabinet enlarged by one[446], and John Kerin was made Minister for Trade and demoted from cabinet. Graham Richardson moved from Social Security to Transport and Communications; Kim Beazley from Finance to Employment, Education and Training; and Neal Blewett from Trade to Social Security. John Button remained, despite Prime Ministerial enquiries into whether he would be prepared to stand aside to make way for a new cabinet minister[447]. As a result there were no new ministers, so Keating appointed additional parliamentary secretaries to reward supporters from the challenge against Hawke. This meant Laurie Brereton, Gary Johns, Stephen Martin and Peter Duncan all found themselves only one step away from the outer ministry[448]. Referring to the composition of the group little changed from the Hawke era, Keating called his first ministry 'old dogs for a hard road'[449].

The cabinet and the outer ministry remained largely unchanged in an attempt to restore some sense of unity, or at least prevent large-scale ongoing disunity on behalf of former supporters of deposed Prime Minister Hawke. Keating talked at his first press conference as leader about how there would be 'no recriminations whatsoever, no raking over old ground, but only a commitment to get on with the task of governing this country'[450]. In this context he later said that 'It was

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[445] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

[446] From 17 to 18.

[447] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 458.

[448] Michelle Grattan, 'Jobs The Target – Dawkins', *Age*, 28 December 1991, p 1; see also Michelle Grattan, 'PM Assembles His Cart – Now For The Bumpy Road', *Age*, 28 December 1991, p 2, for a summary of the 1991 ministerial reshuffle.

[449] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 185.

[450] 1991, 'Reshuffle Within Days', *Sun Herald*, 22 December, p 2.

important to me ... that anyone who had been on the Hawke side of the fight never had any hint or feel of demotion or of distance from me, let alone any notion of retribution'[451]. Keating's purported graciousness, however, was also coloured by the deals and compromises he was forced to make in the lead-up to his ascension to the Prime Ministership. According to Mike Steketee, in order to beat Hawke, Keating 'had to agree to a series of deals and compromises which leaves him with Bob Hawke's Cabinet intact. He had to promise ministers they would retain their jobs in return for voting for him', which meant that he was only able to 'reshuffle the Hawke deck'[452].

One of the major aspects of the 1991 ministerial reshuffle, and an effective illustration of the constraints on a prime minister even with the formal authority to allocate portfolios, came with the choice between Ralph Willis and John Dawkins for the Treasury[453]. Willis was the incumbent, appointed by Hawke only weeks earlier, but Dawkins was a supporter of the Keating for PM push as early as 1988, and a key backer in the 1991 challenges, so both had a reasonable expectation of filling the role. Keating's colleagues and advisers had differing views on the appointment and, to make matters more difficult for Keating, the unions were backing Dawkins while business was sticking with Willis[454]. In the end loyalty to Dawkins won through, but not without extensive negotiations and some consternation over the most effective resolution between loyalty to a supporter and adherence to the principle of stability after the leadership change[455].

The 1991 reshuffle took place in unusual circumstances; mid-way through the life of a government but with a new leader. However, some lessons can still be

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[451] Peter FitzSimons 1998, op cit, p 367; see also John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 458.

[452] Mike Steketee, 'Keating's Crown of Thorns', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1991, p 41.

[453] See Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, pp 187-9.

[454] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating's Treasurer – The First Hard Choice', *Age*, 23 December 1991, p 11.

[455] See John Edwards 1996, op cit, pp 460-1; Michelle Grattan, 'One Vote Down, But the Real One's Still to Come', *Age*, 20 December 1991, p 1.

drawn from the experience for this examination of prime ministerial power. First, key individuals such as Graham Richardson, on the basis of factional and personal influence in the Government, were given significant latitude. In Richardson's case he was largely allowed to pick his own ministry, taking Transport and Communications, and then having significant input into the allocation of the remaining portfolios[456]. Aside from this type of informal conversations with senior Government figures, there was little of the factional manoeuvring for position that characterises the remaining reshuffles. This led Neal Blewett to comment to this author that there 'was a recognition by all factions that given the bruising struggle the party had just been through it would simply destabilise the government further to have a set of ministerial sackings'[457]. There are lessons, too, to be gained from the few cabinet ministers who were demoted in December 1991, namely Kerin, Willis and Beazley. As Peter Hartcher described it at the time, the 'pain of the changes is being borne by people with little avenue for retaliation and no heart for it'[458]. Willis and Kerin could not rely on power bases of their own, and Beazley was, for whatever reason, reluctant to retaliate[459]. This meant the new PM could get away with promoting others into their place.

An opportunity for a further minor reshuffle came in May 1992 with the resignation from cabinet of Graham Richardson after the damaging 'Marshall Islands Affair'[460]. In this case the Prime Minister's hands were tied by a number of factional, gender and historical considerations that prevented him having a free hand in selecting Richardson's replacement. Keating was expected to honour a deal made by his predecessor, Hawke, in 1990, that the next ministerial vacancy would go to the Left, despite the vacancy coming from the Right of the FPLP. Jeanette McHugh was sworn in as the new minister, though Keating

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[456] Marian Wilkinson, *The Fixer: The Untold Story of Graham Richardson* (Melbourne, William Heinemann, 1996), p 344; see also Graham Richardson 1994, op cit, p 339.
[457] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.
[458] Peter Hartcher, 'Softly, Softly Does It', 28 December 1991, p 1.
[459] Ibid.
[460] See below.

preferred Warren Snowdon[461]. In this instance Keating allowed his hands to be tied by other considerations, but this was a situation that would not endure long.

The experience after the 1993 election was dramatically different from the horse-trading and constraints on the Prime Minister seen in the two previous reshuffles. The ministry was largely one appointed directly by Keating, with factional acquiesce, and so bore the Prime Minister's mark. To begin with, the 1993 reshuffle saw a significant degree of renewal, with less than a third of the appointees having occupied frontbench positions in 1987[462]. On top of this, Keating was given the authority to appoint ten parliamentary secretaries. Notable changes were: Michael Lavarch's catapulting from the backbench straight into cabinet; the elevation of Michael Lee from the outer ministry into the cabinet; and Frank Walker and Rosemary Crowley's inclusion in the outer ministry. Factionally, the ministry also shifted markedly to the Right, and at cabinet rank the representation of that group increased from nine out of 18 to 13 out of 19[463]. Michelle Grattan wrote, after the composition of the ministry was made public that,

> With this week's reshuffle, Keating has signalled that he wants to gather power into his own hands, or at least to be able to feel very comfortable with the other hands that wield power. Key areas regarded as important by Keating have gone to intimates (eg, Laurie Brereton in Industrial Relations; Graham Richardson, Health - although some on Keating 's staff doubted the wisdom of bringing Richardson back), protégés (Alan Griffiths, Industry; Michael Lee, Resources) or people that he can supervise (David Beddall, Communications; Robert Tickner, who stays in Aboriginal Affairs)[464].

Grattan then quoted a senior colleague of Keating's saying that the Prime Minister wanted to be able to implement policy easily, consequently he didn't 'want a Cabinet, or a system, full of spikes'[465]. This notion will be returned to in subsequent pages of this chapter.

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[461] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 193; see also Alan Ramsey, 'Poll Focuses PM's Mind Ever So Sharply', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1992, p 25.
[462] 9 out of 30; see Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 259.
[463] See Appendix One; Geoff Kitney, 'New Team Shows the Right Way as the Victor Sees It', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1993, p 4; see also Geoffrey Barker, 'Keating's Ministry to Stamp His Style on Government', *Age*, 23 March 1993, p 4.
[464] Michelle Grattan, 'The People Who Advise Paul Keating', *Age*, 27 March 1993, p 18.
[465] Ibid.

Under Keating's predecessors, Whitlam and Hawke, the caucus (and increasingly the factions) exercised their right to select the executive. Why, then, did a Labor Party caucus, with a tradition and legitimate expectation of electing the ministry, allow Keating unprecedented authority to put together a cabinet and an outer ministry of his own making? The immense authority and influence that came from Keating's personal triumph over John Hewson and the Liberal and National Parties in the 1993 campaign led to this remarkable situation. Graham Richardson has written that a 'measure of the status that victory gave Paul Keating was the way in which the ministry was elected', in this case 'the Labor Caucus simply endorsed a slate of candidates nominated by the Prime Minister'[466]. Peter Walsh adds: 'So unexpected was Keating's victory that the Caucus, or more accurately the factional negotiators, agreed to suspend its own rules and allow him to pick the Ministry'[467]. The 1993 election therefore gave Keating 'a special standing perhaps not enjoyed by any other federal leader in Labor's history'[468], giving the newly legitimised Prime Minister the opportunity to drastically overhaul the ministry. This led Michelle Grattan to write that Keating 'will never be so powerful as now'[469]. Bruce Jones from the *Sun Herald* agreed: 'Paul Keating's astonishing electoral victory has given him unrivalled power - including virtual carte blanche to choose his own ministry' which means he 'has an unprecedented opportunity to put his personal stamp on government'[470].

The final composition of the cabinet and outer ministry says much about how Prime Minister Keating harnessed this newfound power, and the extent to which the final make-up of the group reflected his own priorities. Prime ministerial intervention saw the Right's Lavarch and Lee elevated to cabinet rank, and Walker and Crowley were included in the ministry despite not being supported by

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[466] Graham Richardson 1994, op cit, p 356.
[467] Peter Walsh 1995, op cit, p 254; a view supported by John O'Callaghan, interviewed 20 March 2002.
[468] Michelle Grattan, 'Unwinnable Victory Gives PM New Clout', *Age*, 15 March 1993, p 9.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Clan', *Sun Herald*, 21 March 1993, p 12.

their own faction, the Left[471]. In this respect 'prime ministerial intervention brought significant change'[472]. Two of the appointments, in particular – Lavarch and Walker – are particularly illustrative of the post-1993 election landscape and the power enjoyed by Keating over the selection of his senior colleagues.

Michael Lavarch was sworn in as Attorney-General without any previous ministerial experience, and without significant factional backing from his Queensland Right faction. Indeed he had even attracted that group's ire by supporting Keating over Hawke in 1991. Despite the former, and perhaps because of the latter, the Prime Minister ignored factional considerations and appointed him anyway. In an interview, Michael Lavarch recalled that Keating had 'quite substantial influence' in his promotion, and that 'I wouldn't have become a minister had it not been for his personal decision to want me to become a minister'. In this respect he 'could be a promoter of people who wouldn't have otherwise gotten in through the factional system'[473]. Graham Richardson saw the episode as 'an example of Paul being able to use the power that comes with winning when you're not supposed to win'[474].

Another illustrative example comes from the appointment of New South Wales Leftwinger Frank Walker to the outer ministry over considerable resistance from the Left, who had not elected him to their ministerial 'ticket'[475]. Keating was insistent that incumbent minister Peter Staples be dropped in favour of Walker, a key supporter[476]. This caused a showdown with the Parliamentary Left, and with Peter Walsh, who told a Centre-Left factional gathering that 'We should not allow whatever megalomaniac who happens to be incumbent to have that power'[477]. In the end Keating and Walker narrowly triumphed when caucus voted with a

[471] Interview with Bruce Childs, 16 January 2003.
[472] Graham Richardson 1994, op cit, p 356.
[473] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[474] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[475] See Michelle Grattan, 'PM Earns Freedom of Choice', *Age*, 22 March 1993, p 11 for a credible summary of the showdown.
[476] He was prepared to accept Peter Duncan or Frank Walker, both Keating supporters, to replace Staples.
[477] Quoted in Bruce Jones, 'Left Stubborn on Keating Cabinet', *Sun Herald*, 21 March 1993, p 7.

margin of only six votes for the Prime Ministerial preference. Though one commentator described it as 'a close-run thing for a Prime Minister whose personal authority is supposed to be at such a premium'[478], the counter-view is that Keating won a substantial battle against significant resistance.

Though Keating had to take into account some factional manoeuvring, reward supporters, and give key figures such as Graham Richardson a say in their portfolio allocation[479], the 1993 reshuffle was one in which little consultation was needed. As Brian Howe recounted in an interview, 'consultation can mean different things but on the 93 ministry Keating was pretty well unmoveable ... he basically wanted to reward people that had been loyal to him as he saw it'[480]. The result was that the 1993 cabinet and outer ministry bore Keating's indelible stamp, giving the Prime Minister the 'opportunity to run the Government on his own terms and with a minimum of obstruction' and creating the risk 'that ministers will err on the side of doing what they believe is good for retaining his favour'[481]. This is an important and apt observation, returned to below.

With the resignation of Treasurer Dawkins in December 1993 came the opportunity for Keating to again exercise power over the reshuffling of portfolios[482]. On this occasion Keating went for experience and competence, moving senior ministers sideways into important portfolios. Willis, as expected, was moved to Treasury; Simon Crean became employment minister; and Kim Beazley was shifted to Finance. Two under-performing ministers – Bob Collins and David Beddall – were moved to less demanding portfolios. Keating supporters and factional colleagues Michael Lee (Communications) and Laurie Brereton (Transport) were given additional responsibilities. Also, surprisingly, Ros

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[478] Alan Ramsey, 'Richo's Back, Right Where He Left Off', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1993, p 29.
[479] See Geoff Kitney, 'When One Mate Inquires After Another's Health', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1993, p 13.
[480] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002; also interview with Bruce Childs, 16 January 2003.
[481] Geoff Kitney, 'New Team Shows the Right Way as the Victor Sees It', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1993, p 4.
[482] Bruce Jones, 'PM to Axe Weak Links', *Sun Herald*, 19 December 1993, p 1.

Kelly remained Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories and also became Minister assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women. The cabinet was reduced by one, and 'the Right and Centre Left factions still [held] about 70 per cent of the ministerial posts in the Cabinet'[483]. Within the limited scope of the reshuffle afforded by Dawkins' resignation, the Prime Minister was able to ensure the ministry remained unmistakably a *Keating* ministry.

By mid-1995 Paul Keating had established over his senior colleagues a dominance over the process of ministerial appointment. What was an unusual case of factional and caucus acquiescence in 1993 became the norm, as seen in the process of replacing Brian Howe as Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)[484]. From start to finish the appointment was effectively made by Keating; after some limited consultation he called Kim Beazley and offered him the position. As Peter FitzSimons recounts in his Beazley biography, 'If Keating was asking him, it meant that he had his support, and with the Prime Minister's support it was likely to be his for the taking if Howe did indeed step down ... so he put his hand up'[485]. Despite an expectation that the Left might retain the Deputy's role, Beazley was appointed DPM, completely at the behest of the Prime Minister.

Prime ministerial power over the selection of ministries and the allocation of portfolios is never absolute. Paul Keating, however, on the strength of the 1993 election win, was able to exercise a dominance over the process not observed on the Labor side of politics before. After promoting stability and continuity in 1991 he then moved to a more obviously personal selection of supporters, those he held in high regard, and factional accomplices. These cases, analysed above, show that though he consulted on some selections, the circle was often small and the Prime Minister's view prevailed. The cabinet and broader ministry under

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[483] Geoffrey Barker, 'Mates and Merit Shape Keating's New Ministry', *Age*, 24 December 1993, p 4.
[484] See Geoff Kitney and Tony Wright, 1995, 'Decision Forced By Tired Image', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June, p 4 for a description of the events leading up to Beazley's appointment.
[485] Peter FitzSimons 1998, op cit, p392.

Keating were unmistakably his own creation, with important ramifications for the performance of the Government.

Managing Dismissals and Resignations

Providing portfolios and having a say in who is (s)elected to the ministry is only part of the task. Prime Ministers must also manage ministerial resignations and dismissals. Prime Minister Keating also exercised considerable power over the political management of the crises that surrounded the ministerial resignations of Graham Richardson in 1992 and Ros Kelly in 1994[486], and in Carmen Lawrence's refusal to quit in 1995. From these occasions we can determine the extent to which Keating was, effectively, judge and jury in relation to ministerial resignations arising from allegations of impropriety, corruption or incompetence.

The first ministerial crisis of the Keating Government came with Senator Graham Richardson's resignation from the ministry on 18 May 1992. The event was to prove indicative of the Keating approach to such episodes; he initially showed great loyalty to the Minister before political imperatives compelled him to accept the resignation. In Richardson's case the scandal revolved around his role in what became known as the Marshall Islands Affair[487], and his representation of a somewhat dubious associate. Significant public and internal pressure was brought to bear on Keating; the media and some in the Government urged he be sacked, while other colleagues urged he stay on. Keating was called upon to weigh up 'mateship, the solidarity of the Government and fine judgments about what would follow the sacking or backing course'[488]. At first Keating leaned towards toughing the situation out, reportedly counseling Richardson in a private meeting: 'mate, tell 'em all to get fucked!'[489] In the end Keating asked for a report on the affair from Richardson, who provided it and then fell on his

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[486] The resignation of Industry Minister Alan Griffiths over what became the 'sandwich shop affair' is not addressed here because the Minister resigned before the news even became public.

[487] See Michelle Grattan, 'Mate Leaves Keating in Dark', *Age*, 14 May 1992, p 1 for a description of events; ; see also Marian Wilkinson 1996, op cit, pp 354-8.

[488] Michelle Grattan, 'Richardson's Fate Tests Keating', *Age*, 18 May 1992, p 13.

sword[490]. Much time had passed and damage was done to the Government. Keating, the sole prosecutor of his Minister's fate, was loyal until the situation became untenable.

A similar sequence of events marked the lead-up to Ros Kelly's resignation on 28 February 1994. Kelly, Minister for Sport, had been accused of improperly distributing $30 million of grants for local sporting associations[491]. The situation was complicated because the Minster was a close personal friend of Keating's, and the Prime Minister was known for his loyalty to 'mates'. While Kelly hung on amidst enormous public and internal pressure to resign or be sacked, the Government was in deep trouble[492]. Alan Ramsey described the situation thus:

> The hand of God guards Ros and Keating isn't taking it away, not yet ... Howard might think Kelly is dead meat, and a lot of the rest of us might agree, but if Keating wants her to survive, irrespective of what his Cabinet or his Caucus or anyone else thinks, then survive she will. Keating 's power to make and unmake is absolute. He is as loyal as he is courageous, however foolishly at times[493].

The end result, however, as it was with Richardson, was that the Prime Minister reluctantly accepted the minister's resignation. Although the choice whether to stick with each minister was Keating's alone, the pressure brought to bear on the Government by the media and internal critics was enough to force a retreat from the original Prime Ministerial position of support.

This was not the case in 1995 with the scandal that erupted after Health Minister Carmen Lawrence became embroiled in the 'Penny Easton Affair' and the consequent Royal Commission. This time Keating would not budge, he refused to countenance Lawrence's resignation despite the looming political reality that she

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[489] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

[490] See Graham Richardson 1994, op cit, pp 343, 346.

[491] For a detailed case study of the 'sports rorts' affair see Rodney Smith, 'Visible and Invisible Cultures of Parliamentary Ethics: The "Sports Rorts" Affair Revisited' in *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 34, no 1, March 1999, pp 47-62; see also Geoffrey Barker, 'Friend Who Should be Told to Go', *Age*, 7 February 1994, p 13.

[492] Mark Baker, 'Keating's Pride and the Fall of Kelly', *Age*, 26 February 1994, p 21.

[493] Alan Ramsey, 'Emperor Paul Naked But For Noise', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1994, p 33; see also Alan Ramsey, 'When a Mighty Ally Is Not Enough', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 1994, p 31.

should go. Geoff Kitney remembers how, 'during the Carmen Lawrence thing, he lost all sense of reality, partly because of his sense of loyalty; he saw it as the establishment lining up against him; he thought it the worst of the conservatives to use this thing against Carmen Lawrence; and he was savagely critical of the Gallery who said he shouldn't stick with Carmen'[494]. On top of the media pressure for the Prime Minister to sack the Health Minister, key aides were also urging she be removed. John O'Callaghan remembers a conversation among senior advisers where

> on balance we all agreed that Carmen should have resigned or Paul should have forced her too. But Paul decided he was going to stick with her through thick and thin. It was like he'd decided to hang on to the rusty gate. He wasn't going to let go of her. Paul had decided he was going to stick with her and that was all there was to that. In political terms it was probably an unwise call[495].

Regardless, Keating was able to hold off those calling for resignation. The caucus, media and Party organisation, committed to Lawrence's removal, could not in this case move a resolute Prime Minister from his chosen course of action.

The general observation about Prime Minister Keating's management of resignations and dismissals was that 'you stick by people and defend them [and] you don't show weakness'[496]. It could be argued that Keating's personal loyalty and political stubbornness was detrimental to his ability to manage ministerial scandals and resignations. What is more important to this study, though, is the extent to which his personal view prevailed amidst growing discomfort at his approach. In the first two cases examined here, the PM's preference endured only until the pressures became too great. Keating was loyal to Richardson and Kelly until the weight of the arguments and the political pressures exerted by other sources of power became too great. During the Carmen Lawrence episode, however, Keating remained resolute, and prime ministerial power and preference prevailed.

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[494] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[495] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[496] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.

Patronage

Prime ministers make numerous public appointments; to boards, high level public service and diplomatic posts, and to the ministry. One aspect of this power is the significant scope afforded prime ministers to reward supporters from the Parliamentary Party through patronage, the subject of this section. For example Paul Keating rewarded his backers through an enlarged system of parliamentary secretaryships. To reward 'loyalists, he doubled the number of parliamentary secretaries to eight when he became Prime Minister in December 1991 and then added two more after the last election, thus lifting the size of his executive to 40'[497]. The allocation of portfolios and the insistence on the inclusion in the ministry of figures such as Michael Lavarch and Frank Walker, discussed above, are other ways of exerting influence and stockpiling favours.

A related aspect of the power of patronage involves prime ministerial intervention in the jockeying for position that takes place among the leader's potential successors. During Keating's tenure, a number of names were floated as possible successors, though Kim Beazley was the most often mentioned[498]. Other possibilities were Simon Crean, Carmen Lawrence and John Dawkins[499]. The next generation of Labor leader was widely regarded to comprise Michael Lee and Michael Lavarch, both of whom enjoyed considerable Prime Ministerial support, particularly in Lee's case[500]. Despite the jockeying for post-Keating position, however, there is little evidence of the Prime Minister playing one

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[497] Alan Ramsey, 'Lean Machines? The Reality is Ministerial Bloat', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1994, p 33.
[498] See, for example, Michelle Grattan, 'Right Time For Rise Of Lieutenant', *Age*, 21 June 1995, p 9.
[499] See Tim Colebatch, 'More Voters Want a New Liberal Leader, Says Poll', *Age*, 21 December 1992, p 14; and Brian Toohey, 'After the Vote, a Battle', *Sun Herald*, 7 February 1993, p 32; Don Watson recounts how at one point Keating favoured Dawkins as his successor, 2002, op cit, p 303, though most accounts had Keating accepting Beazley as his natural successor.
[500] For Lee see Geoff Kitney, 'First Hints of Caesar's Abdication', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1994, p 13; Geoff Kitney, 'Living in the Ringmaster's Shadow', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 1995, p 11. For Lavarch consult Bruce Jones, 'Labor's Young-Blood Reformer', *Sun Herald*, 9 October 1994, p 38.

contender or up and comer off against another[501]. Keating's patronage powers were exercised with his input into the composition of the ministry and the cabinet. That he was granted unprecedented powers in this respect is an important factor contributing to his dominance of cabinet.

The Keating Cabinets

Because cabinet is the focal point of traditional Westminster government, and the primary concern of prime ministerial power scholars to date, we learn much from an analysis of the prime minister working through, within, or above the system to guarantee the implementation of personal priorities and policies. Here the Paul Keating Prime Ministership is examined in relation to cabinet meetings. As Table 4.1 illustrates, there were 225 cabinet meetings under Keating, an average of 45 per year.

Table 4.1: Keating Cabinet Meetings

	Full Ministry	Cabinet	Cabinet Committees	Total for year
1991-92[502]	4	69	111	184
1992-93	4	40	80	124
1993-94	2	42	123	167
1994-95	2	43	82	127
1995-96	2	31	63	96
Total	14	225	459	698
Avg. per year	3	45	92	140

Sources: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Annual Reports 1991-1996.

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[501] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[502] Note this figure includes meetings chaired by Prime Minister Hawke prior to the leadership change.

This analysis of cabinet, however, does not suggest that the cabinet process comprises only that which goes on within the walls of the cabinet room, indeed the next section deals more broadly with the system of committees[503], kitchen cabinets, ministerial access to the PM, and other related concerns[504]. The immediate focus is on: the degree wide-ranging discussion was tolerated by Keating; his chairing style; the extent to which he appeared first among equals in that forum; issue advocacy; how often he got his way in cabinet and why; some examples of issues upon which the cabinet clashed and Keating prevailed; criticisms of the PM's commitment to cabinet meetings; and, finally, the evolution of Keating's cabinet style over the course of his prime ministership. We can then determine Paul Keating's stores of power relative to the cabinet, before considering broader issues pertaining to his relationship with cabinet ministers.

Prime Minister Keating surprised his colleagues from the outset with the degree to which he was prepared to oversee wide-ranging discussions of the general political situation in the first year of his Government. Michael Gordon wrote that a 'common reflection of cabinet ministers, whether they were original Keating supporters or not, was that there had been more political discussion in cabinet in Keating's first year than there was during the whole of Hawke's record term as a Labor prime minister'[505], a development greeted warmly by the cabinet[506]. Neal Blewett, for example, recounts how

> cabinet was a much happier place than it had been under the last years of Hawke, partly, of course, because the leadership boil had been lanced. And there was a kind of unity formed out of desperation with all minds focused on how to win the unwinnable election. Keating encouraged far more general political discussions than Hawke had ever countenanced and this was good for cabinet morale[507].

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[503] There were 459 meetings of cabinet committees during Keating's leadership. See Table 4.1.
[504] Michael Keating and Patrick Weller 2000, op cit.
[505] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, pp 222-3.
[506] Michelle Grattan, 'The People Who Advise Paul Keating', *Age*, 27 March 1993, p 18.
[507] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.

Importantly, after the wounds of the leadership challenges, Watson recalls that 'Cabinet members were said to appreciate the degree of political discussion he encouraged, the *esprit de corps* he called up from the decades of experience'[508].

For a politician as forceful and dominant as Paul Keating it is remarkable to consider that his approach to chairing cabinet was low-key and tolerant of opposing views. But, according to a number of interviews conducted for this thesis, as well as some published accounts, this was indeed the case, at least initially. From Neal Blewett we hear that the Prime Minister spoke quietly in cabinet[509], and Graham Richardson remembers debate taking place 'pretty free under Keating, even encouraged'. The latter adds: 'I don't recall him ever strong-arming people in the cabinet - he did that as a Treasurer but not as prime minister[510]. John Button describes Keating as 'pretty low-key in cabinet' and 'not an authoritarian figure in the cabinet room. There was no doubt who was prime minister but he didn't use that in a way that was inconsiderate'[511]. Neal Blewett offers this description:

> Keating generally chaired cabinet in a low-key way and did little to curtail discussion, even if irrelevant, so that discussions often became woefully discursive. I cannot recall any occasion in those fifteen months on which he savaged a minister in cabinet though occasionally, particularly when tired, he could show irritability. He could get excitable on particular topics and intervene excessively but was mostly good-humoured and frequently self-deprecatory. There was plenty of dissent but only if it touched on a prime ministerial nerve was there much reaction and then mostly a sardonic or sarcastic quip[512].

But in general, according to Michael Lavarch, Keating led off on each agenda item, expressed his view and then allowed the matter to be discussed[513]. This is backed up by press commentary; one piece spoke of how Keating 'often starts discussions with his view, then says "that's my view, but I'm open to persuasion",

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[508] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 200.
[509] Neal Blewett 1999, op cit, p 32.
[510] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[511] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[512] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002. It is worth noting, however, that Blewett was not a cabinet minister in the period 1993-96, the years where Keating's commitment to cabinet was more often questioned.
[513] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.

and he listens'[514]. His passive and inclusive approach differed markedly in this respect from his cabinet performances as Treasurer[515].

It is perhaps a stretch to describe Paul Keating, in any domain, as first among equals. But in his chairing of cabinet in that first year of leadership we find the closest match to the traditional type. Graham Richardson told the author that he doesn't 'recall Paul seeking to dominate discussion in the cabinet; he allowed debate pretty freely'[516]. Don Russell's view on this is interesting:

> Neal Blewett expressed the view to me that Keating actually took the cabinet more seriously than Hawke. Not necessarily in the sense of all the rigmarole and due process but in actually being interested in what they had to say, and encouraging them to talk. He didn't pre-cook cabinet meetings. He tended to let any cabinet minister who had some standing have their say and he would attempt to accommodate the views of cabinet ministers or ministers with standing. He would try and pull things together. He expected them to actually participate. He didn't go into the room with a preconceived view. He actually respected and had an interest in what they were going to say. And I did get feedback from ministers that they were actually a bit surprised at the dignity that he gave to cabinet discussions[517].

The Secretary to the cabinet throughout the Paul Keating tenure, Dr Michael Keating, expressed the opinion that Keating was less domineering over cabinet than Malcolm Fraser, and went into meetings with his mind made up less frequently than was the case with Bob Hawke[518]. In Neal Blewett's estimation, Keating, like Hawke, 'strove for consensual outcomes rather than riding roughshod over opposition, though unlike Hawke he made it much clearer the consensual outcome he desired'[519].

When roused to fight for a cause in cabinet, though, Keating could be a passionate advocate. In this respect, and when the policy debate required a Prime Ministerial intervention, he 'saw leading as not a matter of trying to persuade everyone, it was a matter of getting a position and then making it clear

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[514] Mike Seccombe and Bernard Lagan, 'Alone', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1993, p 1.
[515] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 467.
[516] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[517] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[518] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.
[519] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.

to people that that was the position'[520]. Button concurs, telling this author that people would expect Keating to speak out if the discussion was not going to plan, and that he could be a persuasive advocate[521]. Geoff Kitney recalls how 'cabinet ministers would come out of meetings in awe at the way he would take on complicated issues and reduce them to very simple propositions that were just compelling'[522]. Prime Minister Keating appeared to have dropped the hectoring and haranguing style of cabinet debate he had perfected as Treasurer.

The general rule for recent prime ministers is that to get 'rolled' in cabinet represents a direct threat to their position[523]. Paul Keating was never defeated in a cabinet debate, nor did he expect to be, given the authority and influence of the PM in that forum. There were, however, opportunities to change Keating's view of specific details of various policies, rather than the general policy thrust of an initiative[524]. According to Don Russell, 'there were some things which were fundamental, but if it was just a policy thing – whether you had two channels of this or four – he was always willing to listen to anyone who had a legitimate opinion[525]. On specific issues a decision could be slightly altered or delayed for further consideration, as in the case of communication and media policy, though this was rare[526]. Lavarch recalls the Prime Minister wasn't 'utterly dogmatic' about his view, but would usually get his way if the policy being discussed was within his sphere of interest or expertise[527].

Two examples of Prime Ministerial intervention on significant policy debates in cabinet can be found in relation to the issue of media ownership legislation and compact disc imports. In the first instance:

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[520] According to Brian Howe, interview conducted 12 June 2002.
[521] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[522] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[523] For example, cabinet's disagreement with Bob Hawke over the issue of mining and Coronation Hill is widely regarded as sounding the death knell for his leadership. See the ABC documentary series *Labor in Power* 1993, op cit.
[524] According to Don Russell (25 November 2002), Michael Lavarch (26 June 2002), and John Button (25 June 2002).
[525] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[526] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.

> The Prime Minister demonstrated his hegemony this week when Cabinet, in its first big decision since the election, agreed to allow the Canadian media owner, Mr Conrad Black, to acquire 25 per cent of the John Fairfax newspaper group. Despite opposition from the ACTU and media unions, the ALP federal president, Mr Barry Jones, former treasurers John Kerin and Ralph Willis, and significant sections of the caucus, Cabinet approved Mr Black's application with apparently minimal debate on the merits of the issue. Apart from token opposition from Mr Willis, now the Finance Minister, Cabinet focused mostly on technical details of the decision. Cabinet members apparently accepted they had been presented with a fait accompli[528].

Apparently the media ownership issue, despite opposition, required little debate. This was not the case when an evenly split cabinet discussed music imports in 1995. In this case:

> One group of three ministers wanted to break the six companies' Australian monopoly. Another group of three did not, arguing support for local artists. Then Paul Keating spoke. Ministers would say later the Prime Minister spoke for probably 15 minutes, no more. When he'd finished, the debate was all over. The six companies had won. This Cabinet takes its lead from Keating . It is his creation, and his authority is utterly dominant[529].

Michael Lavarch, when asked why Keating's view prevailed in cabinet with regularity, believed the weight of the prime ministerial office; the notion that ministers who opposed Keating would be wasting political capital with him; and that he was a 'strong and persuasive arguer' were the key factors in Keating's dominance of cabinet colleagues[530].

Despite Keating's tolerant chairing style, his willingness to include colleagues in policy discussions around the cabinet table, and the exalted position the leadership affords a prime minister, he was publicly and privately criticised for his decreasing commitment to the institution as time wore on. Numerous sources spoke at the time and subsequently that the PM did not take the scheduling of meetings seriously, and was often late. John Button said 'there was a bit of resentment' that 'cabinet would be kept waiting'. Bob Hogg recalled how 'Cabinet would be called for 10am and then cancelled for some capricious

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[527] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[528] Geoffrey Barker, 'PM Now a Ruthless King of the Road Two Decks', *Age*, 24 April 1993, p 17.
[529] Alan Ramsey, 'Keating Sings To His Mates' Tune', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 April 1995, p 33.
[530] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.

reason, then you'd find out Paul was fucking around at the Lodge until 3 in the afternoon'[531]. Another talked of how the cabinet members 'were all busy people and he'd be out with his two singlets and an overcoat on listening to bloody Mahler'[532]. Adviser John Edwards puts this down to the PM having

> never been a punctual, meticulous person. Some of the requirements of his new job annoyed him. It was important that he be on time for Cabinet, for example, because he chaired it and it couldn't begin without him. But he was often late, and often changed the meeting times. In his mind, he was putting substance before procedure. In the minds of his ministers he was simply disorganised[533].

After the 1993 election the irregularity of meetings had also became a source of disquiet[534].

Like other aspects of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership[535], the commitment to formal cabinet meetings began waning after the 1993 election and reached a low point by 1995. In this vein, Brian Howe makes the following observations:

> Keating was less concerned to build the collective cabinet, particularly after 93, by then he was pretty much running his own race. Prior to 93 I think he put a lot of effort into trying to build camaraderie and trying to take the cabinet very seriously, involve people much more. So there was a big difference between 91-93 and 93-96. In that period he's become much more withdrawn, much more focussed on his own agenda and much less interested in canvassing the views of the ministry as such[536].

Though Keating's commitment to formal cabinet meetings varied throughout the Prime Ministership, he was on the whole a tolerant chair who could switch into advocacy mode on issues that warranted his attention. When this happened the PM would carry the day. Within the walls of the cabinet room, Paul Keating was a dominant Prime Minister, but not always a domineering one.

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[531] Interview with Bob Hogg, 4 September 2002.
[532] Private conversation with senior minister in the Government.
[533] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 466.
[534] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 220; Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, pp 29-30.
[535] In particular the Prime Minister's maintenance of key media and electoral relationships; see Chapters Seven and Eight, below.
[536] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.

Keating and Kitchen Cabinets

This chapter recognises that cabinet is more than just a meeting; it is a system of relationships between cabinet ministers which overlaps into formal institutions such as committees, as well as informal webs of interaction, kitchen cabinets, and bilateral interaction. Policy and strategy can be determined in these sectors of the cabinet system rather than in the formal cabinet meeting which endorses a course of action. Prime ministers navigate this broader cabinet system, and must take into account relationships of power and influence flowing both ways between leader and colleague. This more expansive notion of cabinet's operation is a more effective forum through which to examine prime ministerial power. If a skilful prime minister gets their way, it is likely to be because they have determined where the decision is to be made – in a committee, kitchen cabinet of senior ministers, or in a one-on-one discussion – and have the power to guarantee the outcome.

Recognising the potential for influence, Paul Keating was more committed to the broader cabinet system than he was to formal cabinet meetings. He revamped the committee system in order to concentrate power in his hands and in those of a smaller number of colleagues. He relied on the advice of only a handful of cabinet ministers[537], the closest he came to forming a kitchen cabinet, though the contemporary importance of a policy issue often saw him develop a close but transitory relationship with a particular minister. Cabinet ministers found access to the PM difficult, but not prohibited, and again determined by portfolio and policy climate.

Cabinet committees were newly empowered under Keating, becoming smaller de facto cabinets whose decisions were later ticked off by the larger group. This was particularly so from the outset of Keating's second term in office; committees became 'smaller and fewer than those that grew up under Bob Hawke, and

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[537] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.

Keating chairs each of them'[538]. In more detail, the authoritative Geoff Kitney wrote:

> After the election, in consultation with the secretary of his department, Dr Michael Keating, the Prime Minister radically restructured the Cabinet process. He established a new system under which most of the Cabinet business was re-routed to Cabinet committees; he halved the size of the committees by excluding all the junior ministers and he dramatically reduced the involvement of the full Cabinet in the deliberative process. These days weekly Cabinet meetings have only one or two items on the agenda and are short[539].

A detailed list of cabinet committees, chairs and members is provided in Appendix Three. The effect of this revamping of the committee system to favour decision making in smaller forums had the effect of concentrating the Government's decision-making into a few hands[540], including, of course, the Prime Minister's.

The most powerful of the cabinet committees remained, as was the case under Hawke, the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC). It met most regularly out of all the committees[541], and took on most of the difficult spending and revenue decisions. Brian Howe described the ERC as a 'kind of inner cabinet'[542], comprising the PM, economic ministers and a couple of other cabinet ministers with significant clout to warrant inclusion. Ramsey called it the 'budgetary razor gang'[543], because of its role in the determination of the Government's spending. On policy initiatives such as *One Nation* in 1992 the ERC played a dominant role, though even within the Committee Keating and John Dawkins, working together, were dominant[544].

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[538] Geoffrey Barker, 'A Juggler in Full Flight', *Age*, 4 June 1993, p 17; see also Appendix Three.

[539] Geoff Kitney, 'Small Fuse, Big Row', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 1993, p 17.

[540] Ibid.

[541] Alan Ramsey, 'Poll Focuses PM's Mind Ever So Sharply', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1992, p 25.

[542] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.

[543] Alan Ramsey, 'It's Too Soon For Hewson to Scoff', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 1992, p 21.

[544] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.

The committee system became increasingly important to the broader cabinet process as time wore on. Pamela Williams argued the growing power of committees, and hence the cabinet's most senior ministers, meant that by 1995 the Prime Minister

> changed the way Cabinet operated, telling senior ministers he didn't want arguments in meetings. Instead, important issues were to be sorted out in Cabinet committees before being endorsed by Cabinet … The effect of it was to give portfolio ministers a lot more authority and they would be checked against a small committee which was Treasury, Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet. Then the PM would give it a tick[545].

The situation led to a system where cabinet committees became essentially decision making bodies led by Keating and a small clique of very senior colleagues such as Treasurers Dawkins and then Willis. Power was effectively concentrated into fewer hands, which made the Prime Minister's influence greater than what could be possible if decisions were taken in meetings of a full cabinet of 18 or 19 ministers.

Apart from the formal cabinet committees, there was little in the way of 'kitchen cabinets'; small, informal gatherings of trusted cabinet colleagues who advised the Prime Minister on matters of importance. Keating relied on a fairly fluid group of senior colleagues, though the presence of Brereton was constant, as was Richardson's and Dawkins' until their respective retirements. Various accounts of the ministers closest to Keating vary. Howe, stressing the ad hoc nature of any group, nonetheless includes Brereton, Richardson and perhaps Ros Kelly[546] as constant advisers. Geoff Walsh remembers much consultation with Dawkins, Willis and Brereton[547]. Mark Latham recalls Brereton, Dawkins and Kelly forming a tight group[548]; Blewett lists Dawkins, Richardson and Brereton[549]. Don Russell, Keating's most trusted personal adviser, remembers Richardson, Dawkins, Button and Blewett as the inner core of any group resembling an inner cabinet,

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[545] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 30.
[546] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[547] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[548] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[549] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.

and also at times Gareth Evans, Bob Collins and Michael Lee were included in deliberations[550].

Graham Richardson, John Dawkins and Laurie Brereton's closeness to Keating was based on portfolio interest and passion for policy (Dawkins), and factional and personal allegiance (Richardson and Brereton). Above all it was determined by the extent to which the Prime Minister trusted the advice provided. Mark Ryan, in this context, described in an interview a 'virtuous cycle' where 'Keating gets the advice he needs and the access gets easier when that's been proven'[551]. Graham Richardson (in the cabinet for two stints until 1994) and Laurie Brereton (a cabinet minister from 1993) 'were serious contributors because of the length of time they'd known Keating' and as 'a natural consequence of them being old political allies'. They knew Keating intimately and knew how to get advice to him, when to get advice to him, how to put the advice to him in a way that would get the result'[552]. Brereton, in particular, maintained a very close relationship with Keating, which led one commentator to write that it was 'a fact of Caucus and Cabinet life that Brereton has considerable influence with the Prime Minister'[553].

Brereton, Richardson and Dawkins comprised the inner core of Prime Minister Keating's group of cabinet confidantes, but they were supplemented according to ministerial portfolios and the pressing policy issues of the day. Further, these policy-based relationships tended to be bilateral rather than a conglomeration of an inner cabinet plus the minister responsible for the pressing issue. John Button recalls a situation where there 'was less a kitchen cabinet than individual relationships, and issues Keating would talk to people about. For example him and Gareth in relation to foreign policy, APEC and things like that, and me, separately, in relation to industry'[554]. Keating's relationship with his Deputy, Brian Howe, was also only close when portfolio issues attracted the PM's

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[550] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[551] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Sally Loane, 'Laurie Brereton', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 1992, p 39.
[554] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.

attention, or when discussion of the political management of issues such as reshuffles was required[555]. Attorney General Michael Lavarch was close to Keating sporadically, when legal issues arose[556]. Two important policy relationships were maintained with Gareth Evans, who had carriage of foreign policy as well as the steering of the Mabo legislation through the Senate[557]; and Treasurer Dawkins, who 'made a point of visiting Keating frequently, sometimes without staff' and 'Keating would often see him alone, or with Don Russell only'[558].

Prime Minister Keating was often criticised for not having what other cabinet ministers would regard as an open door policy. That some did not enjoy access to Keating was therefore a significant source of cabinet anguish. John O'Callaghan argues that while ministers had become accustomed to walking into Bob Hawke's office to 'chew the fat', Keating did not operate that way. Instead, 'if he was having a discussion with a colleague it was for a specific reason'[559]. John Edwards argues it took some cabinet ministers

> a long while to learn that Keating wanted to be involved only in circumstances that were truly important or where the minister could not resolve it himself. He loathed it when ministers came around to tell him something merely to have an audience and receive his blessing. He loathed it when ministers would come back again and again seeking a decision they had at first been denied. Sometimes Keating hid in his dressing room and told the staff to say he was out … Not even the tirades of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who sometimes suspected that Keating was hiding from him in his dressing room, would really trouble Robinson [the appointments secretary][560].

Others have since confirmed Keating used to hide in his private bathroom from ministers, often Gareth Evans, when he didn't want to speak with them[561]. Those who could access the Prime Minister were largely those included in the above discussion of closest prime ministerial confidantes. Richardson, Brereton and

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[555] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[556] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[557] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[558] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 467.
[559] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[560] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 466.
[561] Two senior PMO aides confirmed this in private conversations.

Dawkins remained the key beneficiaries of prime ministerial access who could see Keating at short notice[562].

The exclusivity of the Prime Minister's office when it came to consultation with cabinet colleagues largely came down to Keating's style and his lack of close working relationships with many in cabinet. Some commentary published in 1995 talked of how Keating was 'isolated from his own people'. Further, with the resignation of Richardson, and Brereton's preoccupation with his own portfolio responsibilities, no-one 'comes barrelling into Keating's office with advice, to lay down the law, or to just chew the fat'[563]. The effect of this was to create a perception of an isolated Prime Minister relying principally on personal staff. This is a subject returned to in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Cabinet was vital to the functioning of the Keating Government but much of the detailed policy deliberation took place outside the walls of the cabinet room. Prime Minister Keating revamped and personalised the committee system to give himself and a small coterie of ministers a greater say in the debates, and cabinet was in many cases expected to sign off on the committee outcomes. An informal kitchen cabinet comprised only a tiny handful of cabinet colleagues, though periodically others were drawn into the circle when policy issues required it. Access was limited largely to these key confidantes. The effect of all of this was to centralise power in the hands of the Prime Minister and marginalise the full cabinet. Though this was not absolute – full cabinet could at times be taken very seriously (see above) – the Keating Government's major decisions were taken by the leader in conjunction with a select few from the cabinet.

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[562] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002; See also interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.
[563] Sally Loane and Tony Wright, 'Inside Keating's Magic Circle', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1995, p 31.

Pre-empting Cabinet

There were occasions where Prime Minister Keating's dominance of cabinet reached the point where he could and would announce major policy initiatives before they had even reached cabinet for discussion or debate. John Button believes Keating 'didn't have a relationship with cabinet', instead he was 'into dreaming up ideas, in his office, and quite often they were announced without full cabinet consideration'[564]. Neal Blewett concurs, despite being largely impressed with Keating's approach[565], arguing that the 'most presidential aspect of Keating's style was his tendency to gazump ministers – and cabinet - by pre-emption through public statements'[566]. A number of examples of where the Prime Minister largely ignored cabinet can be found. The fiasco that occurred over the granting of woodchip licenses[567] was largely attributable to a lack of cabinet discussion or coordination[568]. Measures included in the 1993 budget were another example of the diminished importance of the cabinet process; 'Aside from Dawkins, Willis and Keating, the first cabinet knew of them was at the 6.15pm briefing on budget night'[569]. Similarly with the release of the Republic Green Paper following the report authored by Malcolm Turnbull's Republic Advisory Committee. Don Watson's recollection was that 'Keating said if he had to take it to cabinet, cabinet would leak'[570], so he announced it unilaterally. This, it appears, was a common trait of Keating's leadership. The three most illustrative examples are provided by: the Government's decision to privatise Qantas; pay television policy; and the signing of the Indonesian treaty.

On 31 May 1992 the Prime Minister announced on commercial television major shifts in policy, including the sale of Qantas and a detailed plan for the

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[564] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[565] See above.
[566] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.
[567] See Chapter Three 'Leading Labor'.
[568] See Alan Ramsey, 'A Question of Where the Weight Falls', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 1994, p 15; Shaun Carney, 'Swooping Into Action', *Age*, 21 February 1995, p 9.
[569] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, pp 267-8.
[570] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 223.

introduction of pay television networks. On both issues he was largely ignoring cabinet by announcing the policy initiatives without taking them first to that forum. According to Michael Gordon, Keating 'announced the decision to merge Australian Airlines and Qantas before the issue had even been discussed in cabinet'[571]. Once announced, Keating then took the matter to cabinet for sign-off, though by pre-empting his senior colleagues the outcome of the discussions was all but assured[572]. In this respect cabinet was presented with a fait accompli, it had 'little option but to endorse the broad proposals' because 'anything else would be a severe rebuff to the PM'[573].

Labor's pay television policy was announced by Keating on the same day, again without cabinet consideration or approval. The thrust of the policy was to allow '45 percent ownership of the entire system by existing TV networks with a limit of 20 percent per network'[574], a contentious decision that eventually attracted the displeasure of some in the cabinet and the parliamentary caucus. One editorial from the *Sydney Morning Herald* described a situation where 'Cabinet is simply sitting back and watching which way Keating takes them. Cabinet remains a bemused bystander'[575]. Again, we can conclude, the fact that the Keating policy was eventually signed off by cabinet is a demonstration of the power of the Prime Minister and the propensity for cabinet to acquiesce to the Prime Minister's publicly declared policy preference.

A slightly different case, but one where cabinet and cabinet committees were largely ignored, came in 1995 with the signing of the defence treaty between Australia and Indonesia. It is important to make the point here that individual ministers as well as the cabinet as a collective were not informed of the negotiations, only discovering the presence and structure of the agreement once

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[571] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 204.
[572] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 199-200.
[573] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating Grabs the Policy Levers to Stop the Dive', *Age*, 1 June 1992, p 13.
[574] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 198.
[575] 'A Question of Question Time', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1992, p 22.

it had been reached[576]. Though cabinet ministers were reportedly satisfied that this was a matter most appropriately dealt with between national leaders, that it was not discussed in cabinet and that key ministers were not kept up to date on the progress of the negotiations is nonetheless illustrative of the Keating approach.

These examples of Prime Minister Keating bypassing cabinet and announcing, unilaterally, significant policy initiatives of the Labor Government, represent an extension of the argument developed in this chapter that while cabinet was tolerated and listened to once convened, some policy areas were nonetheless regarded as part of Keating's personal domain. An *Age* editorial called it Keating in 'presidential mode', 'a flourish of leadership with a capital L' and a 'bold attempt by the Prime Minister to regain the political initiative for a Government wracked with damaging problems and dwindling public support, and to forestall internal wrangling by asserting his personal authority as the key to the Government's electoral survival'[577].

The most important factor in Keating's bypassing of cabinet, as with other aspects of his leadership of the ministry addressed above, is the willingness of senior colleagues to tolerate a situation where policy could be announced unilaterally, with minimal consultation and without cabinet approval. Peter Smark places the blame for this situation firmly at the feet of cabinet ministers who complain 'privately to reporters, to backbenchers and to party intimates, that Paul Keating is so determined to have colour and movement to distract attention from the appalling unemployment figures and the general economic shambles, that the Cabinet has been reduced to the status of a baggage train'. He continues:

> So there's a low drone of complaint about the Keating style, as though the tea and coffee in the Cabinet room had been spiked with some mysterious New Guinea poison which takes away the power of speech. If they are to be believed, they found themselves incapable of saying "no" or even "hang on a minute". Cabinet Government is being reduced to rubber-stamping, they

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[576] See Paul Keating 2000, op cit, p 12; and interviews with Don Russell (25 November 2002) and Michael Keating (26 November 2002).
[577] 'Keating Opts for High Risks, and Good Sense', *Age*, 2 June 1992, p 13.

> whisper, as though their complaisance were not crucial to the process. When Paul Keating was Treasurer, they complained that he maneuvered matters so that real debates on economic policy seldom surfaced in Cabinet. Now, they whinge that he keeps them waiting for hours on Cabinet days, surfaces policy issues with turbo-chargers tied to their tails, and the decisions are whisked away with the "agreed" stamp plastered on before they've had time to arrange their thoughts[578].

That this situation was allowed to arise is indicative of the Prime Minister's dominance over colleagues, their propensity to be by-passed, the dependence on the leader for electoral success, which might be jeopardised by publicly conducted disputes, and the lack of alternative centres of power to which dissenters might turn. In short, Keating's hand-picked ministries and cabinets provided little resistance to a powerful Prime Minister with a passion for policy developed among intimates in his private office and the bureaucracy and often announced unilaterally[579].

Controlling Cabinet

Prime ministers enjoy a privileged position in the cabinet process. They decide if, when and where matters are discussed[580], they enjoy advantages in the amount of advice they receive on cabinet submissions, they play a role in the selection of ministers and the allocation of portfolios, their view is given significant weight in the cabinet room, and it's rare that they are 'rolled' by their senior colleagues. The seriousness of a prime ministerial defeat in cabinet means it is a weapon rarely unsheathed. Indeed, as Graham Richardson observed in an interview for this thesis, 'if you roll the prime minister in the cabinet then his leadership is going to be in some danger, so you find a way to compromise'[581]. Sometimes, as Geoff Walsh observed, 'prime ministers spend their whole lives feeling they have to consult with people who don't feel the same obligation – sometimes they look at an issue and think "this is the course we'll have to go", and just go that

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[578] Peter Smark, 'Tuned Into the Static of Cabinet', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 1992, p 41.
[579] See Chapter Five, below.
[580] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit.
[581] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

way'[582]. All of these factors ensure a prime minister is more first and less equal when it comes to the operation of executive government and the decisions which spring from its processes.

Malcolm Fraser, the comparison to which this study of Paul Keating will periodically return, dominated his ministers and the cabinet process. He managed this by making sure he was exceedingly well prepared and briefed, and that he was on top of all the issues before the group. He was an active and formal chair of cabinet meetings, seeking views rather than votes, and always making sure his view prevailed. The Fraser Government 'was collective; cabinet was involved in all important issues. But the collective purpose was imposed by the leader, the only person to stretch across the whole government in an active way'[583]. His management of ministers was an exhaustive process that saw him garner superior information, which in turn, along with the usual prime ministerial advantages, provided him a superiority over his colleagues.

Another stark contrast with Keating's approach to cabinet is provided by a comparison with the Hawke era. Simply, 'Bob had a more chairman of the board approach to cabinets. He used to trade heavily on his ability to resolve conflicts, and ... actually liked chairing cabinet, whereas Paul was a more insular type of personality, who'd rather put things through quickly'[584]. Hawke tolerated long discussions and fruitful contributions from individual ministers, a luxury afforded him by the talent and intellectual rigour of his early cabinets[585]. According to Stephen Bradbury, 'Hawke would rarely exert his will or dominate debate, but effectively and efficiently presided over robust discussion among some of the most brilliant minds to lend their talents to the development of public policy at

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[582] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[583] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 147; see also pp 133-44.
[584] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[585] Neal Blewett, 'The Hawke Cabinets' in Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (Melbourne, Pluto Press, 2003); see also David Bradbury, 'The institutions of governance: Parliament, the executive, the judiciary and law reform' in Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (Melbourne, Pluto Press, 2003), p391.

the Cabinet table in this country'[586]. Though he was less willing to explicitly stamp his authority on the decisions taken by cabinet, like all prime ministers, he was able to bypass the forum when it suited his ends, for example when he decreed that Chinese students in Australia at the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre would be allowed to stay in Australia. On the whole, though, Hawke allowed decisions to be taken in cabinet by ministers granted autonomy in their own ministerial domains. Unlike Fraser, whose influence and knowledge reached every corner of his Government, and unlike Keating, whose forceful approach and dominance ensured compliant outcomes, Prime Minister Hawke took a more traditional approach to chairing cabinet.

Paul Keating paid less attention to the cabinet process than Fraser and Hawke, despite an impressive beginning, but dominated his ministerial colleagues nonetheless. According to one advisor, there 'are some pretty good examples of things that happened under his Prime Ministership which weren't what you'd call models of a consultative process'[587]. His dominance arose from a number of factors. Most significantly, the authority he earned from winning the 1993 election and the consequent power he was granted to choose his ministerial colleagues meant that he could surround himself with accomplices, supporters, factional colleagues, and like-minded policy architects. The Prime Minister's policy dynamism, and well cultivated interests in key policy domains such as communications and the economy, was another factor; ministers accepted his intervention in these areas and the policy announcements made unilaterally and without going to cabinet.

That cabinet became a rubber stamp in such areas is indicative of Keating's dominance over colleagues. Though the cabinet process was initially regarded as important to the rebuilding of ministerial esprit de corps, and Keating was an accommodating chair, it evolved into a forum in which decisions taken elsewhere were signed off. Committees and bi-lateral decisions filled part of the void, the

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[586] Stephen Bradbury 2003, op cit, p 392.

rest was filled by a confident and powerful Prime Minister surrounded by acquiescent colleagues. In this respect, Paul Keating's alleged wish for a cabinet system 'not full of spikes' was fulfilled, creating as power vacuum filled by the Prime Minister and a powerful coterie of advisers.

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[587] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.

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Governing From the Centre

> From where I sat he *was* the government – or sometimes *we* were. It was not that anyone thought the PMO had an absolute monopoly on wisdom. In fact much that was attempted or done was driven by or drawn down from the perceptions and advice of people outside. But it remains true that the leader who has to lead can't if he listens to every voice he hears[588].

Prime ministers are bestowed with enormous responsibility and perform a myriad of tasks in the course of their duties[589]. To assist them, they rely on institutional and personal sources of advice. In this context, there is an observable trend away from the traditional conception of prime ministerial advice – that resources are provided to the leader as a consequence of their role as head of government – towards large-scale and personal support for the leader which allows them to spread themselves right over the breadth of the government's activities. Accordingly, Patrick Weller writes:

> While all agree that they require assistance in their role as head of government, their need for support as an individual is not so readily accepted. Constitutionally their chief advisers are meant to be their ministers. Parliamentary government is collective; ministers are supposed to be responsible for the development and implementation of policy; cabinet is regarded as the proper forum of crucial decisions. Yet as prime ministers become more active in more areas of policy, so the need for support for the individual, rather than the collectivity in cabinet, has become more obvious and its wisdom more strongly debated[590].

In a recent dissertation, Maria Maley analysed in depth the role of the ministerial adviser, and convincingly argued that the role has grown exponentially since 1972, providing prime ministers in particular with an army of minders to supply personal and political support, perform key communicative, policy steering and coordination roles, guard their interests

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[588] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 43.
[589] Patrick Weller 1991, 'Support for Prime Ministers: A Comparative Perspective', op cit, p 370.
[590] Ibid, p 361.

and assist them with their myriad tasks[591]. Campbell and Halligan add that 'prime ministers have reshaped the institutional resources and frameworks of cabinet government to enhance the responsiveness of these to their own agendas and leadership'[592].

Individual support for the prime minister is required when a leader attempts to govern from the centre, which inevitably requires sources of advice separate from ministers and the bureaucracy. In this situation 'Prime ministers must always appear to know what is happening; their supporting and advisory units must reflect this need'[593]. Sophisticated support mechanisms and large private offices therefore facilitate prime ministerial dominance over colleagues and allow for a more individualised approach to leadership. The result is that 'the advantages of the office' are 'without measure'[594].

Prime Minister Paul Keating relied heavily on a close circle of advisers housed primarily in his own private office and also, to a lesser extent, in the key bureaucratic agencies such as the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the Treasury. The Keating approach to the prime ministership was to 'govern from the centre' by making key decisions, with the advice of a small number of confidantes, and then driving them through the Party and Government's processes. This is a practice that has been discussed in the previous two chapters, and one that is confirmed and strengthened by the arguments developed here.

Paul Keating's interest in the machinery for the provision of advice – the structure of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the bureaucracy for example – was limited. Here was an outcome driven leader, a policy architect, rather than a process leader, as one could describe his predecessor. John Halligan has argued that Keating's 'well-known concern with the "big picture"

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[591] See Maria Maley, *Partisans at the centre of government: The role of ministerial advisers in the Keating government 1991-96*, (Canberra, 2002); see also Colin Campbell and John Halligan 1992, op cit, p 7.
[592] Colin Campbell and John Halligan 1992, op cit, p 8.
[593] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 20.
[594] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 152.

precluded attention to the mechanics and the machinery' of Government[595]. His interest lay in getting the best advice from those near and loyal to him, which meant senior PMO staff exercised significant clout. This also meant that his approach to the organisation of advice provision varied according to circumstance. At times there was a greater reliance on the bureaucracy, at others on the ministry, sometimes on outside advisers in the business and trade union spheres, but mostly on the resources of the PMO. John Halligan observed in the Prime Minister 'a desire to relocate power from the bureaucracy to the executive wing of the parliament as indicated by the tendency to shrink from reliance on the public service in favour of his private office; to draw on what he knew'[596]. The make-up of the Keating office, then, was vital to the fortunes of the Government. In general, the PM surrounded himself with highly educated, intelligent, sharp policy minds and political operators, and rewarded their loyalty with vast opportunities for influence.

This chapter examines in detail the advisory mechanisms upon which Prime Minister Paul Keating drew in the course of his leadership. It deals first with the structure, composition and character of the Prime Minister's Office before analysing the criticisms that the PMO was an arrogant, insular and inaccessible institution which guarded its power tightly and kept the Prime Minister isolated even from senior Government figures. Next, the relationship between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and especially its Secretary, Dr Michael Keating, and the PM and his office is discussed. Important to this discussion is the demarcation between what duties the Department performed and those which were carried out by the PMO. Central to this is the question of whether or not advisers in the personal office were carrying an unusually large policy development load. Another related concern, examined next, is the extent to which the activities of the Government were coordinated; whether there were regular and formal meetings of key advisers for example, or whether other ministerial offices and departments operated as individual policy fiefdoms occasionally intruded upon by the Prime Minister when circumstances arose. Also analysed is the advisory process; how

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[595] John Halligan 1997, op cit, p 55.
[596] Ibid, p 54.

Keating received advice and how it was generally tested on other sources before it was utilised. The latter stages of this chapter then deal with some policy cases and are concerned with the extent to which Paul Keating let ministers develop, administer and implement policies, and the type of issues that would invite Prime Ministerial intervention. Finally, the important issue related to governing from the centre – Australian federalism and the role of states and stakeholders – is analysed generally and then in the context of the Mabo debate.

Paul Keating accumulated power at the centre of his Government so required the advisory resources that could facilitate the dominance he sought. Coordination mechanisms were shunned in favour of small, transitory advisory structures and taskforces formed to deal with particular policy development work. His loyal personal staff and key bureaucrats sympathetic to his agenda provided the advice and the policy creativity that allowed him to intervene in areas which interested him, driving the agenda from his office and governing from the centre. The result was an Office of the Prime Minister which exercised immense power and usurped cabinet as the engine room of the Keating Government.

The Office of Paul Keating PM

Maley's dissertation provides the most comprehensive study of the role of ministerial advisers available, describing their many functions and the relationships between advisers, ministers, and departments[597]. These relationships are complex, and help determine the relative success of a minister.

Under Paul Keating, the Prime Minister's Office was a close-knit, fiercely loyal, and active unit dedicated to the PM's agenda and skilful in exercising power within the system. Further, they were given much responsibility under a centralist regime, indeed one senior public servant described a situation

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[597] Maria Maley 2002, op cit.

where 'under Keating, the advisers *were* the Prime Minister – and they had a very strong role in directing ministers'[598].

Broadly, the PMO employed administrators, and media, political and policy advisers. Accounts of the number of advisers working in the private office vary according to the definition applied, from a low of 30[599] to a high of 50[600] staff. What is certain, however, is that when Keating was sworn in as Prime Minister he increased the size of his office; according to one account it swelled from 24 staff under Hawke to 30 under the new PM[601]. Staff were divided into a policy and an administrative group, the former comprising 11 or 12 advisers who enjoyed special access to the Prime Minister through a custom built[602] back entrance to his personal office[603]. Keating placed great trust in his advisers, the result, according to Michelle Grattan, of their shared experiences during the leadership battle and the Prime Minister's 'tribal' and 'family oriented' approach to politics[604]. The loyalty that flowed both ways between leader and staff created 'a sense of camaraderie and common purpose that few offices could emulate' and a system 'whereby Keating employed good people, treated them well and thereby made the office even more attractive to outsiders'[605].

Keating himself spoke of the familial and close-knit nature of the PMO, and at times lavished praise on the team he had assembled. On the eve of the 1993 poll he called them 'the best prime ministerial office in the history of our land'[606]. Warming up, he continued:

> We have achieved quite a lot, our little group ... We're going to give it a run for our money. We have as a group - and we are a disparate group as Don (Russell) said - put together a pretty canny little story ... I'm only the

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[598] Quoted in Maria Maley 2002, op cit, p 258.

[599] Ian Holland, *Accountability of Ministerial Staff*, (Canberra, Parliamentary Library, 2002) p 10.

[600] This is the number used by Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 36.

[601] Ian Holland 2002, op cit.

[602] A new back entrance to the office was built on the Prime Minister's instruction.

[603] See Alan Ramsey, 'Poll Focuses PM's Mind Ever So Sharply', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1992, p 25.

[604] Michelle Grattan, 'The People Who Advise Paul Keating', *Age*, 27 March 1993, p 18; see also Edna Carew 1992, op cit, p 307.

[605] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 191.

[606] Quoted in Ibid, p 253.

mouthpiece for most of you, as you know. I get in there and do the gabbing when I have to[607].

He spoke further of the office 'family' comprising 'a pretty powerful combination'[608]. Some years later Don Watson recalled that the office 'could be as fractious and dysfunctional as a family too'[609].

The key advisers in the PMO during the Keating Prime Ministership were Don Russell, Mark Ryan and Don Watson, though only Watson remained throughout. These three enjoyed the closest relationships with the PM, and Russell was universally regarded as the most favoured of all the advisers[610], with Watson filling the void left by Russell when the latter left the Office to be Australian Ambassador to the United States[611]. Keating is reported to have said that 'In the five years we've worked together he [Russell] and I have seen eye-to-eye on every single issue'[612]. One commentator labelled Russell 'without question the most influential person in Parliament House next to the Prime Minister himself' and 'the principal point of contact in Keating's office for ministers who generally will take a decision from Russell as equivalent to one from the Prime Minister'[613]. Don Watson was an academic historian and writer who became the guardian of the Prime Minister's conscience and a special confidante. A colleague of Watson's commented that 'Keating trusts his [Watson's] perception and consults him on all sorts of issues. He is more than a speechwriter'[614], he was 'a sort of spiritual adviser to Keating, responsible for formulating and focusing many of the "big picture" issues that are the pride of the Keating repertoire'[615]. The third of this trio, Mark Ryan, was press secretary to Treasurer Keating, staying on as a key adviser until 1994. Ryan was a tough and courageous operator with the job of presenting

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[607] Reported in Michelle Grattan, 'Russell To The Rescue', *Age*, 21 October 1995, p 17. The speech was widely reported after a tape of it was released to the *Independent Monthly*.

[608] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 254.

[609] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 38.

[610] Don Watson has written that 'Keating loved Russell if not as a son then as a younger sibling', 2002, op cit, p 215.

[611] Russell loyally returned late in 1995 to run Keating's office in the lead up to the 1996 election.

[612] Quoted in Alex Mitchell, 'The Man, The Power And The Passion', *Sun Herald*, 28 January 1996, p 9.

[613] Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Clan', *Sun Herald*, 21 March 1993, p 12.

[614] Ibid.

[615] Sally Loane and Tony Wright, 'Inside Keating's Magic Circle', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1995, p 31.

unpalatable information to the Prime Minister[616]. He was said to be an early convert to 'the Keating code: never give in, and attack is the best form of defence'[617]. Together, these three provided the backbone of the PMO during the Keating Prime Ministership.

A number of other important figures came and went during Keating's leadership. Among them were a succession of principal advisers who replaced Don Russell; in turn Allan Hawke, Geoff Walsh and John Bowan. Political advisers included Tom Wheelright, Bill Bowtell and Stephen Smith. In the international arena Ashton Calvert, who became Ambassador to Tokyo, made way for Allan Gyngell. Economic advisers Ric Simes, John Edwards, Nigel Ray and Bruce Chapman rotated through the role. Simon Balderstone was responsible for indigenous affairs, the environment and sport and was eventually replaced by Mark O'Neill; Anne de Salis advised on immigration and other general policy; Mary Ann O'Loughlin oversaw social policy and Craddock Morton took care of the arts. Anne Summers advised on women's issues until shortly after the 1993 election, and Sam Mostyn oversaw communications. Press secretaries Greg Turnbull and John Miner handled the spin operation[618].

Maria Maley's reputational analysis of ministerial advisers during Keating's leadership offers an intriguing insight into the perceived relative power of PMO advisers. In the sphere of political strategy, all respondents to her survey (themselves ministerial advisers from across the Government) named Don Russell as the most influential adviser, with Watson, Bowtell and Bowan also making the top six. Among policy advisers, Russell again topped the list, and was joined by other PMO advisers O'Loughlin, Simes, Chapman, Gyngell, Mostyn, and O'Neill in the list of the nine most influential. This poll underlines two important factors: one, that influence was concentrated in the Prime

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[616] Bruce Jones, 'All the President's Mien', *Sun Herald*, 12 September 1993, p 33.
[617] Tony Wright, 'Pulling the Levers to Become a Republic', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 1994, p 11.
[618] For more detailed discussions of the composition of Keating's private office see Bruce Jones, 'All the President's Mien', *Sun Herald*, 12 September 1993, p 33; Michael Millett, 'The Heavy Teams Roll Up For Poll', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1995, p 29; Bruce Jones, 'Voice of a Listening Leader', *Sun Herald*, 11 September 1994, p 29; David McKenzie and Jane Hutchinson, 'Key Influences Behind the Power in Canberra', *Age*, 28 April 1993, p 25;

Minister's Office; and two, that other advisers recognised the power and authority of the PMO and its key staff.

Though membership of the inner circle of Keating advisers rotated frequently, and longevity in the various roles was rare, an office character nonetheless remained. One aspect of this is what Don Watson explained at some length in his recent Keating biography, the battle between 'bleeding hearts', emphasising social policy and a bigger role for government, and the 'pointy heads' who were economic rationalists. The predominance of 'pointy heads' can be attributed to Keating's reliance on advice from former Treasury bureaucrats who had joined his personal staff, including the most senior adviser, Don Russell. Indeed even his appointments secretary, Peter Robinson, was an economist[619]. The second most employed group had a foreign affairs background, a group including Geoff Walsh, John Bowan, Ashton Calvert and Kim Gyngell. Another common trait for PMO advisers in that period was the holding of a doctorate[620]. Bruce Chapman believes this is because Keating 'liked academic, evidence based characters' around him[621]. Bruce Jones tells one amusing story about this group:

> Keating, who left school at 15 and has no formal tertiary education, has a talent for attracting highly qualified, committed and loyal staff including, over the years, a large contingent of PhDs known as The Eggheads. Soon after he joined Keating 's staff Gyngell took another staff member aside who had been calling him 'Doctor' to explain that he didn't have a PhD. 'Well, what the hell are you doing here?' was the staffer's joking response[622].

The narrow field from which advisers were hired led some to criticise the range of advice reaching Keating.

Despite the perceptions, an argument can be made that Keating attempted to include in his office a diverse range of views that would challenge the prevailing economic sentiment of the PMO. The appointment of Anne Summers is an example of this; her feminist views are unlikely to have fit

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Don Watson 2002, especially p 37; John Edwards 1996, especially p 526; Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit.

[619] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 191.

[620] Russell, Calvert, Simes, Chapman, Edwards, Watson, Hawke all had PhDs, to name a few.

[621] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

[622] Bruce Jones, 'Voice of a Listening Leader', *Sun Herald*, 11 September 1994, p 29.

perfectly with the socially conservative Prime Minister though she came to occupy a very senior role in the Office[623]. Similarly, Bruce Chapman did not share Keating's and the other economists' degree of faith in markets, but was hired and listened to anyway[624]. Aside from some attempts to encourage a diversity of views represented in the PMO, two other factors which appear to have influenced Keating's hiring of advisers can be identified. The first factor is Keating's preference for creative thinkers rather than administrators, the 'politically clever and policy smart'[625] who could effectively brief him orally[626]. The second factor is a theory expounded at some length by a very senior figure interviewed for this thesis. This source argued that the Prime Minister developed very close relationships with those people around him who had no power bases of their own, and so owed him a significant degree of loyalty. This meant he could work with them because they were only there through his grace and favour and their influence was entirely dependent on him[627].

Though the battle between alternative points of view raged within the walls of the PMO, advisers nonetheless seemed to adopt common mannerisms and a style directly from their boss. John Edwards recalls how 'everyone on his staff spoke the same kind of language'[628]. Others wrote how 'those around him even take on the same dress habits and deportment: the dark, sleek tailored suit and the haughty straight-back prance'[629]. In more detail, Gordon recounted how 'Throughout Parliament House, the Keating staff tended to be identified by dark, well tailored, double-breasted suits, and a confident manner that was easy to interpret as arrogant. They even acquired a certain swagger, which other staffers were prone to imitate'[630]. Beazley staffer John O'Callaghan remembers, laughing, that PMO staff would 'dress like Paul; it used to amuse Kim and I waiting for these jokers to arrive and they'd all be

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[623] See Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 199.
[624] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.
[625] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[626] Geoff Kitney, 'Change of Watch on Ship of State', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 1993, p 15.
[627] Private conversation with senior bureaucrat.
[628] John Edwards, 'Writing About Paul Keating: Inside the Inside Story', *Sydney Papers*, vol 9, no 1, 1997, p 13.
[629] David McKenzie, 'Keating's Steady and Eager Climb to the Top', *Age*, 20 December 1991, p 11.
[630] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 191.

clones of Keating'[631]. The similarity in style and the swagger adopted by the Prime Minister's advisers became a superficial representation of the isolation and insularity of the Keating office.

The Prime Minister's Office, we can conclude from this brief discussion, was a forum for tough political operators and intelligent policy architects to earn and maintain the loyalty of the PM and be rewarded with loyalty and responsibility in return. A succession of senior advisers enjoyed Keating's respect and thus exercised enormous clout throughout the Government. The closeness of the PMO, despite internal policy differences, saw it perceived as an exclusive club impenetrable to outsiders. With a lack of familiarity came suspicion and criticism.

Organised Chaos

The Keating Office was criticised often, mostly for a perceived lack of administrative competence; for the composition of its staff; and, most significantly, for restricting access to the Prime Minister. That the PMO attracted so much criticism is a reflection of the secretive and isolated nature of the Keating operation, and his reliance on close, trusted advisers in his own private office. Governing from the centre, therefore, created widely-held sentiments of distrust and dislike.

The Office has been described as one where organised chaos reigned. This is the impression garnered from Don Watson's work[632], and from the interviews conducted for this thesis. Watson writes how in 'airport lounges chief executives and their secretaries asked me what the hell was going on in the Prime Minister's Office – they don't answer letters, they don't return calls'[633]. He also described how letters to the Prime Minister could go six months without a response, and 'invitations sent in February were not responded to by April'[634]. Another very senior figure told the author that 'the office was a

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[631] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[632] Don Watson 2002, op cit.
[633] Ibid, p 153.
[634] Ibid.

shambles', and 'was difficult to deal with'. There was a 'sloppiness' in the PMO operation, an 'ill-disciplined process', it 'was just amateur hour' and they couldn't organise their own work patterns[635]. John Della Bosca, then a senior Party figure from the New South Wales Branch, recalls how

> There would be a huge creative effort every now and then. But you wouldn't know what would come out of it, or even what the gestation period would be, or if whatever it was might change form before the birth. It was creative but chaotic. It gave you a bit of vertigo dealing with them. It was a bit like being in a mad movie. There were always doors slamming and people wandering in and out and pieces of paper floating around[636].

Labor MPs reportedly even took to calling Keating's PMO the 'black hole', where their submissions and proposals were lost forever[637]. Mark Ryan attributed the perceptions of disorganisation to the realities of political management. Agreeing that the Office could appear chaotic, he argued 'life in a political office was not always an orderly exercise' because 'what you agree is going to be the strategy on the Monday morning is not what it ends up being by Tuesday afternoon'[638]. Despite this rationalisation Ryan and Don Watson did put some effort into reforming the administrative processes of the PMO.

Criticism of individual staff in the Prime Minister's Office was also common during Keating's leadership. Some believed the staff were arrogant and out of touch, and that they were Canberra-centric and removed from any appreciation of middle Australia[639]. The exalted policy influence enjoyed by the PM's advisers also attracted the criticism that ' you had all these egos in there writing policy'[640]. Individual staff were criticised for pushing specific agendas. Don Watson and Anne Summers attracted the most criticism. The predictably scathing Peter Walsh, for example, wrote that Keating had 'recycled Anne Summers who had been appointed head of the Office of the Status of Women by Hawke in 1983' and who 'quickly set about inflicting policy damage on the Government'. Watson, he commented 'formerly wrote

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[635] Private conversation with senior ALP Official.
[636] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 45.
[637] Bruce Jones, 'All the President's Mien', *Sun Herald*, 12 September 1993, p 33.
[638] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[639] Interviews with John Button, 25 June 2002 and Bob Hogg, 4 and 5 September 2002.
[640] Private conversation with senior ALP Official.

jokes for Max Gillies and then commenced writing them for Keating' but Keating 'took them seriously'[641].

However, aside from derogatory remarks made privately and publicly about the disorganisation and staffing of the PMO, by far the most often heard criticism was that the Office isolated the Prime Minister and restricted access, even by senior players in the Government[642]. One minister, for example, found it 'near impossible to get into the prime minister's office; you were lucky if you got to see senior people in his office, it was very hard'[643]. The same source remembers that 'people were saying "oh, we thought it was hard to see Hawkey, now it's impossible to see Keating"'[644]. John Button, stressing he himself could get in to see the PM, told this author that 'the office was regarded as arrogant' and that 'ministers had a hard time getting in to talk to Keating'[645].

Despite the perceptions of isolation, however, it seems that figures in the Government were reluctant to even try to access the PM or have some input into the operation of the Office[646]. Predictably, PMO advisers such as Watson, Russell, Chapman, Walsh and Ryan defend the regime, pointing out that access was never denied, and that people with standing could see the Prime Minister when the circumstances demanded; there 'was nothing to stop anyone coming in and I never heard of anyone being asked to leave'[647], wrote Watson, for example. Bruce Chapman believes there was a perception that the PMO was isolated, which differed from the reality. He expressed the opinion to this author that people may have been given signals that Keating was only interested in the views of a handful of people, so they stayed away[648]. This view is backed up by Don Russell, who believes a 'lot of the attitudes were self-inflicted; people just thought it was impossible ... because

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[641] Peter Walsh 1995, op cit, p 248.
[642] See David Day 2000, op cit, p 428.
[643] Private conversation.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[646] Don Watson 2002, op cit, 544.
[647] Ibid, p 42.
[648] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

they were intimidated I guess'[649].   Mark Ryan is more dismissive of the criticism:

> A lot of comments that were made about the office were self-serving. I can assure you the office door was wide open for anyone with ideas. Anybody with practical, sensible, real world solutions, got access. I think it's a bit childish for people to run around saying the office was inaccessible.   Most of the cabinet was very experienced, cabinet meetings get held, ministers have access. People trying to seriously suggest that people like Gareth Evans or anybody, Beazley, any of the cabinet, if they wanted to get to Keating they would get to Keating. A lot of it I think came from the hangers-on and the apparatchiks. They were quite happy to sit on the sidelines and sort of bleat about whatever they thought the problem was on the day. But we weren't interested in the bleating we were interested in the people who had a solution[650].

In a different vein, Geoff Walsh argues 'Paul came to the office with an enormous amount of parliamentary and ministerial experience. This is a bloke who had a highly-tuned sense of what the political issues would be, where the political questions would come from. So, there'd be a lot of people anxious about things that he'd given thought to and anticipated'[651]. Don Russell adds that 'anyone of standing could always get through', and that 'every minister knew they could just pick up the phone and I'd talk to them; you'd always take a call from any of the ministers and key principal advisers, and you'd always take a call from a senior staffer you knew'[652].

Criticism of the PMO reflected a frustration throughout the Keating Government that the Prime Minister and his staff were bunkered away in the Office, oblivious to the views of colleagues and operating in a vacuum. That Keating relied predominantly on the advice of Russell, Ryan, Watson, and other senior PMO figures exacerbated the perception that the remainder of the Government was secondary to Keating's advisory needs. Even if the criticisms can be justified and rationalised by PMO figures, the fact that disquiet abounded is significant to Keating's Prime Ministership. If the perception that only a handful of advisers were listened to created a situation were people stopped trying to access the PM, then consultation becomes even less likely. In this respect, Keating's actual reliance on close advisers,

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[649] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[650] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[651] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[652] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.

and his senior colleagues' recognition of this, further isolated the Prime Minister from the rest of the Government.

The Prime Minister's Department

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for coordinating the activities of the agencies of government, developing policy in select areas, organising key events, and supporting cabinet. The Department's role has strengthened over time, and particularly over the past three decades, in response to a number of pressures including the wider public sector reform agenda, the demands of managing a diverse public sector and increased expectations of coordination and coherence in government. Beginning in the 1970s, it had by the 1990s added policy and coordinating roles to its traditional administrative, representative and protocol responsibilities. PM&C provides a prime minister with the capacity to set the direction for the whole government. It is a powerful resource available to be tapped by a leader wanting to exert influence right across the government[653]. According to Mike Keating, former Secretary of PM&C, and Patrick Weller, 'This capacity has allowed, and possibly even encouraged, the prime minister to take over the driving seat in a limited number of policy areas .... Where the prime minister seeks to drive policy, the department will provide the policy capacity'[654].

Annual Reports released by the Prime Minister's Department during Keating's leadership tenure provide valuable insights into the roles and objectives of PM&C. Of particular utility is a detailed chapter in the 1992-93 report titled *Understanding the role and functions of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*, which matches the Department's roles with the Prime Minister's, namely: setting strategic direction, staying informed of activity across government, concentrating on some selected key policy areas, maintaining the machinery of government, managing cabinet processes and the legislative agenda, dealing with the states and territories as well as other nations,

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[653] For a history of the development of PM&C consult Colin Campbell and John Halligan 1992, op cit, pp 45-6.

monitoring national security, and helping to draft speeches and correspondence and prepare the PM for numerous meetings and other engagements[655]. Other duties include coordination (maintaining links with departments and agencies; advance warning of issues; long term directions); briefing work (detailed papers, advice, policy work); implementation of policy (COAG, microeconomic reform); government support services (cabinet and parliament; electoral matters; public service); special policy and program functions (key issues and some program delivery); corporate services (finance, personnel, technology, training, visits)[656].

To perform these roles, the Department maintained a similar structure throughout the Keating Prime Ministership[657]. Key divisions typically included:

Government Support Services (Cabinet Operations; Government Business; Official Establishments; Ceremonial and Hospitality);

Special Policy and Program Functions (Multicultural Affairs; Status of Women; Science and Technology Policy; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs);

Corporate Services (Executive; Support Services; Program Support);

Governor General;

Portfolio Policy Advising Agencies; (Australian Science and Technology Council; Office of National Assessments; Office of Economic Planning Advisory Council; Office of the Resource Assessment Commission); and

Public Administration and Accountability (Public Service Commission; Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman; Merit Protection and Review Agency; Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security).

Departmental Policy Advising (Economic; Industries, Resources and Environment; Social; International; Commonwealth-State relations; Northern Development).

From figures provided in Annual Reports, PM&C outlays during the Keating period ranged from $73.7m in 1991-92 to $99.2m in 1992-3. Throughout this time, the total staff numbered approximately 500.

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[654] Michael Keating and Patrick Weller 2000, op cit, p 62.

[655] Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Annual Report 1992-93*, (Canberra, AGPS, 1992), pp 24-5.

[656] Ibid, pp 26-40.

[657] Consult PM&C Annual Reports from 1991-92 to 1995-96 for detailed organisation charts.

Under Prime Minister Paul Keating the Department drove key policy initiatives such as, for example, *One Nation, Working Nation*[658], Mabo, APEC, and forestry policy[659]. Reading John Edwards' biography of the PM, it seems policy work was the primary function of the Department – in this it played a central role – though 'Keating did not encourage the department to dictate to other departments, and very few policy initiatives from his department could get far without the cooperation of his personal office advisers'[660]. It also provided a research and support function for the Prime Minister's Private Office, housed specialist policy experts across the main areas of government, and supplied corporate memory. Don Watson called it the 'great privilege of office', where 'the PMO went for all information and advice of substance – for policy, for anything requiring a sophisticated argument or documentation or for drafts or notes for speeches'[661]. The role of Keating's PM&C varied according to policy priority and Prime Ministerial requirements. Don Russell comments that, because 'it's main role is to service the prime minister', its activities are driven by the leader rather than by a separate or independent agenda. Under Keating, 'the resources of the Department got channelled towards those functions and those policy areas that the prime minister wanted, particularly in the areas which cut across a couple of ministers'[662]. The Department's role and influence thus varied according to the priorities of the Prime Minister which, in Keating's case, meant concentrating on a small selection of key policy initiatives.

An understanding of Paul Keating's relationship with the Secretary of his Department, Dr Michael Keating, is central to any analysis of the PMO-PM&C link. Michael Keating has been described as 'the explosively tempered, single-minded professional economist with little time for Public Service politics. He doesn't play the game, just his own game. Nor does he come from the mainstream of the Public Service, where he is as intensely disliked by

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[658] Commonwealth of Australia, *Working Nation: Policies and Programs*, (Canberra, AGPS, 1994).
[659] See Michael Keating and Patrick Weller 2000, op cit, p 62.
[660] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 467.
[661] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 46.
[662] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.

many as much as he is admired by some'[663]. He was appointed immediately following Paul Keating's ascension, replacing Mike Codd 'because he had an activist approach and could be hugely influential in the policy sphere'[664]. The Keating to Keating relationship was formal, but very close. The Secretary was given significant scope in the policy fields which interested him, for example labour market reform. He was a trusted adviser on issues upon which he had specialised knowledge, and made himself indispensable to the Prime Minister. Don Russell explains that the PMO would 'always make sure he [Mike Keating] got in if he had a list of things he wanted to talk to the Prime Minister about'. Further, the Secretary 'would work closely with the advisers in the office' and 'would often be around because the Secretary of the Department would be the note taker in the cabinet room'. This proximity, as well as his policy nous, rather than his position at the head of the Australian Public Service empire, according to Russell, brought Mike Keating access and influence[665].

Despite the close working relationship the Prime Minister established with the Secretary of his Department, PM&C's role and influence diminished somewhat in the transition from Hawke to Keating. One commentator wrote early in the Prime Ministership that the 'department, with a staff of 500, has lost the place in the sun it enjoyed under Hawke and Codd. Unlike Hawke, Keating has no departmental people on his personal staff'[666]. John Halligan concurs with the second point, arguing that Paul Keating's 'view of PM&C was reflected in the staffing of Keating's private office, the upper echelons of which were dominated by trusted former Treasury advisers'[667]. Further, most likely because of Keating's long association with the Treasury, the balance of power between that Department, PM&C and Finance was altered, leaving the Treasury with an exalted advisory status not enjoyed under Bob Hawke[668].

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[663] Alan Ramsey, 'The Keating Duo: Harmony at Last', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1992, p 23; ; see also Michelle Grattan, 'PM Assembles His Cart – Now For The Bumpy Road', 28 December 1991, p 2.
[664] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[665] Ibid.
[666] Alan Ramsey, 'The Keating Duo: Harmony at Last', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1992, p 23.
[667] John Halligan 1997, op cit, p 54.
[668] Ibid, pp 53-4.

The operation of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet under Paul Keating was coloured significantly by his reliance on a handful of trusted advisers within his own private office. In this respect, according to a Deputy Secretary from PM&C, Meredith Edwards, 'mandarins didn't rule the day'[669], advisers did. Further, Keating did not intervene in the structure or management of the Department[670]. The most important relationship was a personal one – between the two Keatings – rather than an institutional one. As Alan Ramsey explained, Paul

> Keating has always been wary of the bureaucracy as an institution. As in politics, his ministerial style of using it is cemented in personal relationships. He keeps the real power in his own office. Departments are there as an administrative adjunct, no more. The public servants he likes are those he cultivates as committed to what he wants to do[671].

Consistent with the Prime Minister's general approach to receiving advice from a trusted inner circle, Michael Keating enjoyed a special status. His Department, however, was used to varying degrees depending upon the policy expertise and coordination required. It operated less as a monolithic centralising force in the Australian Public Service and more as a reactive, supporting institution for the Prime Minister and the PMO's agenda.

Demarcation and Coordination

Maley has argued elsewhere that 'in the Keating period, ministerial offices could be significant 'policy powerhouses' in their own right, often sharing roles with the department in policy initiation, policy development and policy implementation, and working in close partnership with departments in these traditional policy making functions'[672]. The Keating office was itself a policy-oriented one, exercising much clout in its relationships with departments. Indeed the PMO exercised much power over the entire public service, and

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[669] Interview with Meredith Edwards, 4 March 2002.

[670] Ibid.

[671] Alan Ramsey, 'The Keating Duo: Harmony at Last', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 1992, p 23; see also David McKenzie and Jane Hutchinson, 'Key Influences Behind the Power in Canberra', *Age*, 28 April 1993, p 25.

[672] Maria Maley 2002, op cit, p 162; see also pp 162-200 (for advisers' policy roles) and pp 201-239 (for advisers' coordination roles).

advisers could, and were known to, act against the advice of PM&C and other agencies[673].

With such a powerful and policy-active private office operating in a highly centralised environment it's important to consider where the demarcation between what the PMO and the Department did, lay[674]. A popular perception is that Prime Ministerial advisers shouldered an unusually large policy development load, a view backed up by memoirs from Don Watson and John Edwards, admittedly themselves advisers. In reality, though, the Department was at various times called upon to develop policy, coordinate a process of policy development, or provide research and technical support for PMO advisers. Here the demarcation between PM&C and the private office is examined before an analysis of the lack of formal coordination mechanisms is conducted. From this discussion we learn that the relationships between Prime Minister Keating's sources of advice were symbiotic, transitory and ad hoc. There was little in the way of systems of coordination and there was no rigid allocation of responsibilities. This can be seen as evidence of a disorganised Government or of a flexible, policy oriented set of institutions, responsive to the needs of a creative leader. At different times in the Keating's Government's lifetime it could be either.

The demarcation of work carried out by advisory institutions was, therefore, not absolute. It was a symbiotic relationship between Office and Department. Though one rare clear-cut cleavage was provided by issues deemed too 'political' for the Department. For example, PM&C did not participate in the Question Time briefing, as it had under Malcolm Fraser[675]. This aside, there was no clear demarcation; duplication and symbiosis of institution and staff reigned. Michael Keating explains the situation thus:

> There's obviously a degree of duplication, because each is responsible
> for policy. The PMO was more inclined to second guess on policy, partly
> prompted by asking questions in the first place. But usually a good office
> doesn't waste its quite scarce capacity to answer questions, they use it

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[673] Ibid, p 260.
[674] For an analysis of political-bureaucratic relationships in general, consult Maria Maley
2002, op cit, pp 115-61.
[675] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.

> to ask questions. The Department has more capacity, so it should, to develop policy, though the Prime Minister's Department, once it's established that it's fair dinkum about a policy, would either hand it over to a line department or involve the line department and coordinate the work[676].

This allusion to the PMO raising policy questions but lacking the capacity to answer them is a theme repeated by Don Russell, who argued that

> the PM's office has a lot of staff but doesn't have much depth ... At the moment it's still one clever person with an overall understanding of the area. The smart ones and the ones who've worked for a while can write cabinet submissions and briefings and all that sort of stuff. But it's hard to do detailed research. So, the practice has always been that the adviser needs some sort of secretariat and some sort of support, and that'll either be PM&C or it will be in the department of the minister that the adviser is following ... And they would probably give the Prime Minister's Department the role of coordinating and probably providing advice and there's enough depth in PM&C to create a PM&C view, because in any area you'd be relying on the expertise of PM&C[677].

John Edwards adds that 'advisers drew on the Department for policy work, and rarely intruded into the department's job of coordinating views, managing work committees and executing and overseeing decisions'[678].

In the absence of a more sophisticated or formal system, the separation between who raised issues and who explored them in more detail is a useful way to view the demarcation between Departmental and PMO responsibilities. It neglects, however, the fact that there were occasions when advisers did undertake the bulk of policy development, just as there were times when PM&C set the agenda and drove the process. Mark Ryan nominates arts policy, specifically *Creative Nation*, and women's policy as two examples of where the PMO carried the policy load, but notes that the Department was usually responsible for the detailed work in other areas[679]. Illustrations of significant policy work from the Department, overseen by advisers, abound. Native Title, *Working Nation*, and competition policy are areas nominated by Michael Keating where the bureaucracy took the lead[680]. In respect to placing issues on the agenda, this was a more mixed approach. Some matters were given prominence by the Prime Minister, notably, for example, the republic.

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[676] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.
[677] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[678] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 469.
[679] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[680] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.

Others were placed on the agenda by external influences such as the High Court's ruling on Mabo. At times, however, the Department could initiate the process of policy development, as was the case with *Working Nation* and National Competition Policy[681]. The demarcation between Departmental and PMO responsibilities was, therefore, an ad hoc relationship based on the location of expertise and other factors.

This ad hoc and transitory approach to governing carried over into the coordination of the Keating Government's activities[682]. In this context, little additional effort was put into ongoing, formal coordination mechanisms between the PMO and Departments[683]. Bruce Chapman recalls how

> It didn't have the structure of process that you might have expected. It's not like someone said let's do a cost-benefit analysis of the following six areas of policy, with evidence coming from the various departments and being looked at closely by Prime Minister and Cabinet, costed with Finance. It wasn't like that[684].

More specifically, there was a notable absence of regular meetings between key advisers from the Department and the Prime Minister's Office. We get a small hint from the Prime Minister why this did not occur in his 2000 publication *Engagement*, in which he writes that 'the pressure is always on for as many officials as possible to be present at meetings, so no-one's nose gets out of joint. I resisted this rule as often as I could'[685]. This is illustrative of the Prime Minister's approach to receiving advice, that is that it comes from a small group of confidantes rather than as a result of exhaustive meetings and bureaucratic processes. Michael Keating, on the other hand, thought the institution of regular coordinating meetings would have been beneficial. He told this author in an interview that 'we did it occasionally but not regularly'. Further, it wasn't PM&C's role to participate in private office meetings because of their political nature[686]. Periodic attempts to impose formality

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[681] Ibid.

[682] The following paragraphs refer largely to coordination at the ministerial office level. For a detailed look at coordination across government agencies consult Colin Campbell and John Halligan 1992, op cit, pp 59-91.

[683] For a detailed analysis of the relationship between private offices and departments see Maria Maley 2002, op cit, particularly pp 84-7.

[684] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

[685] Paul Keating 2000, op cit, p 29.

[686] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.

ultimately failed[687]. Coordination therefore became reliant on individual relationships between advisers in the two principal advisory institutions.

Coordination of the activities of the PMO and other ministerial offices was similarly lacking structured formality, though some attempts were made to rectify this. Greg Turnbull, the Prime Minister's long-serving Press Secretary, recalls being

> surprised, and horrified in fact, when I came to the Prime Minister's Office in 1992, by the separateness of the operation that existed between all of the ministerial offices. This was characterised by the enemies of the Keating office as our arrogance and our failure to communicate. I think it was just a sort of corporate arthritis that had set in after so many years in government. I would rarely see or speak to other ministers. You would fax things to their offices even though they were forty metres away. There was that sense of separate empires[688].

The ultimate costs of paying insufficient attention to the coordination of the ministerial offices became obvious. The debacle over forestry policy which blew up over the granting of licenses and the blurred lines between the responsibilities of two ministers is one example of this[689]. Another came late in 1995 when Don Russell, meeting ministers individually in the lead-up to the 1996 election, 'discovered there was something like 19 ministerial statements all planning to be made before the end of 95' which demonstrated 'a lack of coordination going on at that time'[690]. Some attempts at coordination were, however, made. For example Don Russell would chair a Monday morning meeting of senior advisers to plan for the coming week and coordinate ministerial activities. Mark Ryan and Stephen Smith from the PMO would also conduct strategy meetings with ministerial offices, ostensibly to plan for Question Time in Parliament but also to clear the air on other pressing political issues[691]. These attempts at coordination remained the exception rather than the rule throughout the Keating Prime Ministership.

The advisory arrangements under Paul Keating were driven by policy priorities and political pressures, rather than by formal and ongoing processes of

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[687] Interview with Meredith Edwards, 4 March 2002.
[688] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[689] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.
[690] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[691] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.

bureaucratic coordination and planning. Don Russell describes this process as 'driven by the moment'[692]. Consistent demarcations of responsibility were largely non-existent, instead driven by expertise and administrative and research capacity. The Government lacked formal coordination mechanisms and worked instead on the basis of individual relationships and the formation of transitory working groups and committees directed towards specific policy initiatives. The advisory process therefore reflected the personality of the Prime Minister; they were policy, rather than process, driven.

Advising the Prime Minister

This emphasis on substance over process carried over into the ways Paul Keating preferred to be briefed and advised. He relied heavily on oral advice from his private office and brainstorming sessions within it, largely shunning the extensive written material supplied by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. He tested pieces of advice extensively, running ideas past other advisers and also on key players external to the PMO. He was an attentive listener who, on issues where he had not formed a view or possessed insufficient knowledge, respected expertise and valued specialist advice. On their part, advisers within the Prime Minister's Office tried, mostly in vain, to soften the extreme edges of the PM. If mistakes were made by advisers Keating would not rant and rave at them; their loyalty to the leader and feelings they may have let him down was punishment enough. In short, the manner in which Prime Minister Keating was advised was a reflection of his personal style. He went for advice where the expertise or the political nous was, testing ideas verbally before making a decision.

Keating rarely took advice without running it past another advisory group, often made up of former staffers who had moved to the private sector. He 'instinctively seeks advice from many sources'[693], wrote biographer Michael Gordon. His method of obtaining advice was to 'get political or policy advice from one of the group, then run it past the others, wrapping it up with his own

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[692] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[693] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 190.

ideas along the way'; it 'was an intimate, informal process'[694]. It could also be a secretive process, where PMO minders were left in the dark on who the Prime Minister had consulted. This principle could apply within the Office also; advisers often knew little about the extent to which others had been consulted on policy issues. John Edwards explains how it was 'difficult to keep informed about things that Keating himself was up to. Often he would tell his advisers only what and when he needed them to know. Sometimes he would forget to tell them at all. Don Russell's freedom of action relied on his having superior information, so he would not keep the advisers informed either'[695].

Prime Ministerial advisers in the PMO competed daily with the advice Keating took from trusted confidantes outside the office, a group that included, among others, former adviser Peter Barron and ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty. The Prime Minister is said to have phoned Barron 'several times a day if he was grappling with difficult issues'[696]. When Don Russell left the PMO to take up the role as Australian Ambassador in Washington he retained his trusted status and was consulted regularly. This was also the case when Mark Ryan, Seamus Dawes and Tom Mockridge left for the private sector. In effect 'Keating simply continued the relationships by phone'[697]. The provision of advice became a competitive process where PMO advisers contended with the outcomes of discussions Keating had with trusted confidantes outside the office. Don Watson summed up the situation when he wrote that it 'was strange to hear the office described as a bunker, impenetrable to outside influence, when those inside knew that they competed every day with advice he took on the telephone'[698].

Prime ministers receive a vast amount of written briefing material, mostly from the Department, some of which is solicited whereas most is not. The Secretary of the PM&C, Michael Keating, recounted in an interview how

> the vast bulk of advice just comes whether he wants it or not. I think
> that's true of all prime ministers, the Department's just preparing advice

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694 Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, pp 44-5.
695 John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 468.
696 Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 27.
697 Ibid, p 44.
698 Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 210.

> so it comes over, it doesn't have to be asked for. Sometimes the Office would ring and ask if we were covering something, an issue that was running hot in the day's press. Just reassuring themselves that we had the information over there. That happened without me getting involved as Secretary[699].

The unsolicited material from the Department was read selectively, if at all. Of most value to the Prime Minister was the key factual information on international relations and the economy, and the advisory notes on cabinet submissions. According to Michael Keating 'he was attracted by that sort of immediate, factual stuff'[700]. Sometimes the material would be edited down further by the PMO, making it more accessible and adding political lines that Keating could utilise. At times he would also ask for papers on longer-term or more analytical issues, such as the operation of other federations, for example[701].

On the whole, however, Prime Minister Keating shunned the volumes of written advice provided by PM&C. According to John Edwards,

> The Prime Minister himself would rarely read PM&C material, except rapid reviews of a Cabinet submission, briefing books for foreign visits, briefings for Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meetings and so forth. Much less than a tenth of the material ostensibly generated by the department for the Prime Minister was read by the Prime Minister. He saved himself a lot of time and lost very little by this selectivity[702].

Paul Keating's style was not, therefore, to spend countless hours reading written briefs, in contrast with his two immediate predecessors. His approach to Question Time, for example, required that he only learn a small selection of key statistics, and then let his hectoring and combative debating style do the rest. That meant that the Department's Question Time brief was often passed over for the oral rehearsal of key lines in the PMO[703].

This practice of discussion, rehearsal and brainstorming was observable throughout the Keating Prime Ministership. Meredith Edwards spoke of how Keating 'thought in pictures' and was 'not an avid reader of briefs', preferring

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[699] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.
[700] Ibid.
[701] Ibid.
[702] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 469.
[703] Ibid.

'two hours of discussion about something rather than reading the brief'[704]. Mike Seccombe wrote of this in more detail in 1992:

> Some people remember things better if they see them written. Some recall better what they hear. Paul Keating, apparently, is one of the latter. Not that he's illiterate. He reads and writes as well as the next person. But when it comes to briefings from staff and bureaucrats, he would rather be told than be presented with masses of paper. That is one of the reasons he is such a consummate politician. A lot of the really choice bits of politics are hard to track down in writing. The sledges, the allegations, the insults, are passed down orally. On his feet and without papers the PM can call to mind not only facts and figures, but ancient slights and hatreds, sleazy deals done and broken - in short, all the dirt which is so much his stock in trade[705].

This preference for oral advice and discussion is a subject picked up in interviews for this thesis. Geoff Kitney argued the PM 'was a very oral person' who 'preferred to have conversations rather than read briefs', making 'judgements based on what he heard orally' after 'brainstorming sessions with people for who he had high regard'[706]. A contemporary concurs, adding that Keating 'got people around him that he could bounce ideas off and absorb verbal information'[707].

Though the Prime Minister was well-known for his forceful views on a range of policy areas such as international relations, the economy, industrial relations, communications and the arts, he would consult extensively with advisers and external experts when he had not yet formed a view or when his own technical knowledge was insufficient to make a decision. In these instances he was an attentive listener. Despite the perception that he had little respect for university education, he valued expertise and relied on it heavily[708]. Bruce Chapman agrees, providing the decision on interest rates in the first quarter of 1995 as an example. In this case the Prime Minister 'genuinely had an open mind', 'he said I don't know, help me on this'[709]. His reported disdain for academics and specialists is inaccurate. The Prime Minister respected academic expertise and relied on it often.

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[704] Interview with Meredith Edwards, 4 March 2002.
[705] Mike Seccombe, 'The Heat of the Kitchen Puts Keating on the Boil', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1992, p 6.
[706] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[707] Private conversation.
[708] Interview with Meredith Edwards, 4 March 2002.
[709] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

Within the PMO, advisers worked assiduously at controlling the advice reaching Keating, and unsuccessfully at preventing outbursts directed towards the media. In the first respect, before advice reached the Prime Minister it was first tested rigorously within the advisory group. Don Russell put in place a system where 'no adviser would put a proposition to Keating unless it was tested first on others in the office'[710]. The second task was more difficult, sometimes requiring physical force to prevent Keating taking a course of action which the Office thought counterproductive! In this context, reportedly

> Long-suffering media adviser Greg Turnbull once told Keating , after he had griped about his 'back of the plane comments' providing headline fodder, that he could rid himself of the problem by not venturing down the aisle of the RAAF 707. Keating ignored the advice. Principal adviser Geoff Walsh took even more desperate measures, trying physically to block Keating's path. That didn't work either. If Keating has something to say, he will say it, regardless of consequences[711].

Efforts to control and modify Keating's behaviour, therefore, ultimately failed. Though, as Don Watson has commented, the PM could be herded into a course of action, but it took some skill and guile. In a somewhat comical, patronising way, Watson believed Keating 'was like a sheep. We'd always try and get him through the gate. It was a case of, if you hurry him, rush him, you won't get him through at all. You have to move a bit this way. A bit that way. Then you rush him when his feet are in the right position and he's looking the other way. That's the way you get him through. And once he's through he has a lovely time'[712].

If an adviser's attempt to coral Keating failed, if advice was not well received, or if mistakes were made, the Prime Minister was uncharacteristically gentle in his reprimanding of staff. An illustrative and somewhat surprising account came from a senior PMO adviser, reproduced here:

> I can remember once being curled up in the foetal position on the floor once when he'd ticked me off about something. A mistake I'd made. But he did it so gently. The paradox of Paul is that people in the public – and everyone's got a view about Paul Keating – thought it must have been

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[710] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 190.

[711] Michael Millett, 'The Heavy Teams Roll Up For Poll', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1995, p 29.

[712] Speechwriter and senior adviser, Don Watson, quoted here in Maxine McKew, 'Don Watson', *Bulletin*, 16 April 2002, p 44.

very tough to work for such a vicious street fighter, but that couldn't be further from the truth. As an employer and as a friend he was a very gentle and civil person. I don't think he ever raised his voice to me in a belligerent way. But, he did tell me when I did things wrong, as I did frequently. And it was much more powerful because he would just gently say 'mate, we didn't really pull the right rein there'. That would be enough to make me think oh god I've let him down, why can't I be as smart as him[713].

Others also raised in interviews the gentle nature of Keating's relationship with advisers. Though mistakes did not go unmentioned, Prime Ministerial reprimands were delivered with dignity. Keating expected loyalty and respect from staff and reciprocated in spades.

Consistent with the approach to advisory institutions and the coordination of their activities analysed earlier, Prime Minister Keating did not rely on a strict advisory regime or excessive process. He simply went for advice where he determined he could get the most value. This could mean relying on PMO advisers, as he often did, or it could mean getting on the phone to former advisers or external confidantes. It could just as likely mean consulting with academics or experts, or specialists in Treasury, PM&C, or elsewhere in the Commonwealth Public Service. He concentrated his effort only on discussions that would contribute to policy development or political survival. In the words of John Edwards, 'Keating guarded his energy by focusing on substance and neglecting procedure. He often ignored aspects of the job unrelated to winning the forthcoming election or coping with the recession'. Whereas 'Hawke's days had been filled with an orderly procession of appointments', 'Keating refused'[714]. Consultation with advisers and the receipt of advice took place according to Prime Ministerial prerogative. To use a Keating-ism, he went 'where the weight was'. This was the key organising principle for the provision of advice from all available sources.

Policy Fiefdoms

The second component of this chapter's analysis of centralised government involves the extent to which Prime Minister Keating involved himself in policy

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[713] Private conversation with senior PMO adviser.
[714] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 467.

development. In the policy domain Keating was an active and interventionist Prime Minister, but only in relation to a handful of pet policy issues. On the whole he allowed ministers free reign to administer their departments and develop and implement policy. The exceptions came in areas such as communications and media policy, the republic, economic policy, international relations, and management of the Accord. By intervening only in a limited number of policy domains the Prime Minister was, paradoxically, maximising his influence. Michael Keating argues that Paul Keating 'always had a view that Hawke had spread himself very thin over everything and had as a result influenced nothing, and was determined to do the complete opposite. He would pick a few things were he could be absolutely dominant'[715]. Here the notion that the Prime Minister gave other ministers significant operational scope is examined before the areas which attracted Keating's interests are isolated and analysed. Finally, a study of the Mabo issue is undertaken in an attempt to draw out some lessons for Keating's Prime Ministerial power in the policy sphere, and to examine in more detail the importance of commonwealth-state relations in the Australian federal system of government.

Letting Ministers Administer

Popular perceptions of a one-man Keating Government leave little scope for the observation that ministers were largely left to their own devices. But with specific exceptions, policy development and implementation was undertaken by Keating's ministerial colleagues. This led David Adams to write that the Prime Minister 'rarely second-guessed his ministers. They and their departments were usually given the responsibility to carry out their portfolio tasks'[716]. Apparently Keating 'would consult with his ministers, discuss broad objectives, offer his own ideas but then send ministers off to do the job of developing policy and pushing it through the government decision making processes'[717].

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[715] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.
[716] David Adams 1997, op cit, p 16; see also John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 467; Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.

This appears to have been a conscious Prime Ministerial strategy rather than a ceding of ground based on other pressures. Keating himself wrote in 2000 that 'the core dynamics for Labor when I became prime minister were the quality and experience of our ministers. They needed no prime ministerial micro-management of their portfolios'[718]. Immediately after the 1993 election he expressed a similar view to staff at a meeting held 5 April in Canberra. He told advisers that 'he wanted to encourage ministers to do their own thing – so long as they had reached agreement with him and Cabinet on what "their own thing" was'[719]. For better or worse, this was an approach that carried right through the remainder of the Keating Government.

The component of the policy cycle least interfered with by the Prime Minister was the implementation phase. In this respect Keating has reverted to the Hawke model. Even when the development and debate of a policy was handled close to Keating, it's ultimate implementation was then handed over to ministers to oversee. Edwards writes that the PM 'could and did occasionally use his prestige and influence to initiate major new policies, the execution of which would then be returned to ministers'[720]. An example of this came with the delivery of the various components of the *One Nation* policy statement in 1992; 'after it was delivered responsibility went back to ministers and their departments'[721]. This was indicative of the Prime Minister's approach to policy implementation. *Working Nation* was similarly implemented in ministers' offices, in this case primarily the office of Simon Crean, and he was given significant latitude in which to operate[722]. This approach had some costs, for example Keating's hands-off approach to forestry policy, until it was too late, can be partially blamed on the intense caucus conflict over that issue[723].

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[717] Geoff Kitney, 'Hands-Off PM Curbs Those Holding Levers of Power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1993, p 11.
[718] Paul Keating 2000, op cit, p 11.
[719] John Edwards 1996, op cit, pp 514-15.
[720] Ibid, p 446.
[721] Ibid, p 467.
[722] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.
[723] Interview with Michael Gordon, 19 September 2002.

The day to day running of departments was also, predictably, left to individual ministers. Prime Minister Keating had no desire to impose himself on the processes of Government, just the key outcomes. John Button remembers being left largely to his own devices in the industry portfolio, for example[724]. Michael Lavarch has a similar recollection of heading the Attorney-General's Department. He believes 'it would have been more difficult to be minister for the arts or something because he would have his bloody size nines all over it! If he wasn't interested in your portfolio areas he gave you a pretty clear run to pursue your own endeavours'[725].

Policy Interventions

Paul Keating had always been a politician driven by policy, and this remained little changed after his ascension to the leadership late in 1991. He narrowed his focus, however, to a handful of specific policy areas, notably communications, media, the republic, industrial relations, Mabo, foreign policy and economic management[726]. In these areas Keating 'wielded the Prime Minister's authority like a sword'[727]. His personal style ensured that Prime Ministerial intervention brought the desired result. To Kitney, writing in 1993,

> Keating's involvement in the nuts and bolts of policy would be confined to particular, strategically important areas. Maybe. But no-one in the Federal ministry really believes that this means they are all going to have the luxury that ministers had in the Hawke years of almost unfettered control of their portfolios and policy priorities. The qualities which most distinguish Keating are a passionate interest in new ideas, his tendency to embrace them unequivocally, and his determination to get what he wants. Underlying this is an acute sense of the possibilities of power. When he gets into an issue he throws his weight around. Those who resist him - even if it is to try to head off wrongheaded policy - do it at their own peril[728].

The policy issues which invited such intervention are examined in turn below.

Pay television and media policy offered early opportunities for the Prime Minister's willingness to intervene in specific policy areas to be observed. In

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[724] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[725] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[726] Interviews with Brian Howe (12 June 2002) and Michael Lavarch (26 June 2002).
[727] Geoff Kitney, 'Hands-Off PM Curbs Those Holding Levers of Power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1993, p 11.

relation to the granting of pay TV licenses, Fred Brenchley wrote in the *Age* that the 'thrust of the policy comes straight out of Mr Keating 's office. Given his obsession with media and its power, there was never any chance he would allow it through without his personal stamp'[729]. Similarly with foreign media ownership laws, the Keating view triumphed over the minister who had carriage of the issue, then-Treasurer John Dawkins. Prime Ministerial intervention altered dramatically the final policy, and Dawkins and the rest of the cabinet bowed to Keating's will[730].

Industrial relations policy, and the management of the Accord negotiations, was another policy domain claimed by Keating, though Minister Brereton and his office had significant input. Bruce Chapman expounded at some length, in an interview for this thesis, the process by which industrial relations initiatives were negotiated. He described a process undertaken one-on-one between Keating and ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty. For less important issues Chapman himself drove the process from the PMO, involving Brereton, his adviser Ashley Mason, and the Department of Industrial Relations only when circumstances demanded it.

The development of budgets is a more contested area when it comes to determining whether the Prime Minister encroached on the Treasurer's key responsibilities. It seems that the detail of the 1992 budget was, in the end, left largely to senior ministers, with Keating surprisingly leaving Canberra with the budget not quite nearing completion. This led Grattan to write that,

> with the Budget only a fortnight away next Tuesday, Paul Keating this week absented himself from the cloisters of Canberra after his statement on youth unemployment. Unlike his senior colleagues, the PM did not spend his days poring over the figures in Cabinet's expenditure review committee. He went off to campaign in Queensland. At first blush it was rather surprising when, at the start of the Budget process, Keating handed over the chairmanship of Cabinet's expenditure review committee - which puts the Budget together - to Treasurer Dawkins[731].

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[728] Ibid.

[729] Fred Brenchley, 'Keating's Pay-TV Policy – What's Good for the NSW Right', *Age*, 15 October 1992, p 19.

[730] Geoff Kitney, 'Hands-Off PM Curbs Those Holding Levers of Power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1993, p 11.

[731] Michelle Grattan, 'PM Tries the Hustings As Dawkins Trims the Bacon', *Age*, 1 August 1992, p 2.

Bruce Chapman, himself involved heavily in budget development in the latter years, recalls Keating playing a more significant and hands-on role in the process. In more detail:

> When it got close to the time when you really had to have a budget put together there'd be tonnes of material floating around and he'd pull it all together. He'd get Willis in, he got Beazley in, a couple of economic advisers from his office – me and Ric Simes – and he says OK what's this budget look like? When people didn't have a clear framework he'd say right, this is what it will look like. ... He loved the detail of economics. And after four hours you've got something that looks like a budget. And he was running it[732].

This latter account, not withstanding the approach taken in 1992, appears consistent with Keating's willingness to involve himself heavily in economic policy, an area in which he had accumulated much interest and expertise.

The Labor Government's policy on the establishment of an Australian Republic was initiated, developed, debated, announced and sold by Prime Minister Keating. The process was run from the PMO, with Departmental assistance, from start to finish. There was little consultation with other ministers, and the Attorney-General's Department played an insignificant role[733]. A similarly centralised process was utilised for the development of the defence treaty with Indonesia. Michael Keating identifies this as a time when 'he was way down the presidential end of the spectrum' and 'wouldn't even tell ministers what he was up to'[734]. Foreign policy was a general area in which Keating exercised significant influence, including, for example, in the negotiations over the establishment of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The most significant policy, for this study of prime ministerial power under Paul Keating, came with the extensive negotiations over the policy response to the High Court's Mabo judgement. A detailed Mabo case study is provided below, because it illustrates not only the advisory aspect of governing from the centre, but also sheds light on Australian federalism and power sharing with states and other stakeholders.

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[732] Bruce Chapman interview, 4 December 2002.
[733] For a detailed analysis of the republican debate and Keating's role, see Malcolm Turnbull, *The Reluctant Republic*, (Melbourne, William Heinemann, 1993).
[734] Interview with Michael Keating, 26 November 2002.

Steering States and Stakeholders

Because the Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of six states and two territories, power is necessarily shared between the central, federal government and the governments of the states and territories[735]. It is difficult to overstate the importance of federalism to Australia's system of government, indeed, according to the highly respected Sir Ninian Stephen, federalism is 'the foundation upon which rests our whole Australian polity, our system of government'[736]. The commonwealth government is generally considered responsible for macro economic policy, foreign affairs, trade and defence, and the states in charge of service delivery and local law making, but the reality is that the demarcations are nowhere near so simple or so clear cut[737]. While the formal structures of Australian federalism are rooted in the Commonwealth Constitution, now more than one hundred years old, and the forum for interaction is the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)[738], these provide only the basic frameworks for evolving and ever-altering relationships of power between the nine governments and the personalities, often from opposing political parties, who lead and run them[739].

For the purposes of this dissertation, the most important aspect of federalism is the extent to which state and territory governments impinge on the power exercised by Australian prime ministers over the governance of the country. Because much of the prime ministerial power literature has its origins in Britain, which lacks a federal structure, this aspect of prime ministerial

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[735] For detailed analyses and histories of the Australian federation see the collection edited by Gregory Craven titled *Australian Federation: Towards the Second Century*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1992); and see also Brian Galligan and Cliff Walsh, *Australian federalism: yes or no*, (Canberra, Federalism Research Centre, 1991).

[736] Quoted in Brian Galligan, 'Australian Federalism: Perceptions and Issues' in Brian Galligan (ed), *Australian Federalism*, (Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1989), p 2.

[737] Ibid, p 11.

[738] Fort a detailed and useful discussion of the structure and role of COAG see Meredith Edwards and Allan Henderson, 'COAG – A Vehicle for Reform', in Peter Carroll and Martin Painter (eds), *Microeconomic Reform and Federalism*, (Canberra, Federalism Research Centre, 1995).

[739] See John Summers, 'Federalism and Commonwealth-State Relations' in John Summers, Dennis Woodward and Andrew Parkin (eds), *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia*, (Sydney, Longman, 2002), p 89.

relationships is often unfortunately overlooked[740]. But any interactionist analysis of power relationships in Australia and alternative sources of influence must take into the states and territories and their premiers and chief ministers, all of whom possess significant power resources and scope for political influence. Federalism creates the potential for much intergovernmental conflict[741]. In short, despite an observable long term trend towards the centralisation of governmental functions such as taxation, leaders of provincial governments within a federation have the ability to make life difficult for a federal nation's prime minister.

Federal and state and territory governments, prime ministers, premiers and chief ministers, clash over countless issues including taxation and financial relations[742], specific purpose grants from the commonwealth government to the states[743], microeconomic reform[744], and other related issues. Prime Minister Keating pursued an active federalist agenda, establishing the Council of Australian Governments in 1992, a twice-yearly gathering which comprised the PM, premiers and chief ministers, and the president of the Australian Local Government Association[745]. Under Keating, major disagreements with the states related to the commonwealth's technical and further education (TAFE) policy, high school curricula, company regulation[746], and National Competition Policy (NCP). Though there is not room enough to discuss each of these disputes, they do, however, shed further light on Australian federal - state relations, and provide worthwhile lessons for analyses of prime ministerial power. Here, a more detailed examination of one example, the Mabo case – a key policy issue of the Keating Government – is undertaken in this context, and some conclusions regarding federalism and Paul Keating's stores of authority and influence drawn.

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[740] The Australian literature does not always overlook the states as an alternative source of power. See, for example, Patrick Weller 1989, op cit.
[741] See John Summers 2002, op cit, pp106-11.
[742] Ibid, pp 93-4.
[743] Ibid, p 97.
[744] Peter Carroll and Martin Painter (eds), *Microeconomic Reform and Federalism*, (Canberra, Federalism Research Centre, 1995).
[745] Ibid, p 109.
[746] John Summers 2002, op cit, p 110.

On 3 June 1992 the High Court's Mabo decision ended the premise of *terra nullius* – that Europeans settled in an unoccupied Australia – and placed aboriginal land rights firmly on the national political agenda[747]. It was an issue forced on the Labor Government by an external and independent institution, in this case the High Court[748], and one which created overnight significant disputes with some states. In Keating's words, the ruling provided the opportunity for white Australia to reconstruct 'the fundamental relationship between the nation and its indigenous people' on 'just foundations'[749]. The issue was enormously important, in terms of federal – state relations, national significance and also with respect to the Prime Minister's own standing. Because Keating had an 'intense personal interest' in the development of a just and workable legislative response to the ruling, failure would have important ramifications for his leadership[750]. From this brief case study of the Mabo issue some lessons relating to prime ministerial power can be isolated.

The Parliamentary Library's detailed Mabo chronology illustrates in some detail the heated debate that followed the High Court judgement[751]. Aboriginal groups, mining and other business associations, state and territory governments, pressure groups and lobbyists, and the Opposition all joined the fray, creating a frenzied and very public debate over an appropriate Government policy which could placate and reconcile competing interests and stakeholders including, of course, the state and territory leaders, some of whom held views diametrically and fundamentally opposed to the Prime Minister's.

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[747] For a detailed chronology of the Mabo debate and excellent explanatory notes see Department of the Parliamentary Library, *The Mabo debate: a chronology*, (Canberra, 1993). For useful analyses see: Peter Butt, Robert Eagleson and Patricia Lane, *Mabo, Wik and Native Title*, (Sydney, Federation Press, 2001); and Murray Goot and Tim Rowse (eds), *Make a Better Offer: The Politics of Mabo*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1994).

[748] Greg Turnbull commented on the fact that an external and independent institution, not the ALP, put Mabo on the agenda, in an interview conducted 20 July 2002: 'There were all these people who'd say it's a Labor Party, left wing, apologist sop to aborigines, it's all a political thing, the Mabo thing. He'd say, 'look, there I was minding my own business being a Labor prime minister, and some characters across the road hand down this judgement ... and they reckon somehow it's a political thing on my part'.

[749] Paul Keating quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 271.

[750] Innes Willox, 'Crucial Move for Keating', *Age*, 12 June 1993, p 2.

The negotiating process that Keating undertook in his attempts to provide a legislative response to Mabo was extensive and exhaustive. In essence, the Prime Minister was pursuing an issue on which some in the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and many in State Governments around the country held a view opposed to that of the PM. The State Governments were a particular problem for Keating, as were, more specifically, Premiers Wayne Goss (Labor) in Queensland and Richard Court (Liberal) in Western Australia – states with significant mining interests and conservative constituencies. The Prime Minister and the States both held power resources: Commonwealth legislation could override that of the States; but the 'political reality', was 'that the States can create mayhem by trying to resist a federally imposed system and plunging the issue of determining land ownership into a legal morass with potentially damaging consequences for the investment climate and for social cohesion'[752]. In the initial stages of the negotiations it appeared that an agreement couldn't be reached, and that Keating's introduction to negotiated politics would be a failed one; 'the premiers and the Prime Minister might as well have been speaking different languages'[753].

Opponents of the legislation the Prime Minister was proposing came from many quarters. Alan Ramsey wrote

> You shouldn't think Paul Keating is fighting only Wayne Goss over Mabo. There's Jeff Kennett in Melbourne, and Richard Court in Perth, and Hugh Morgan at Western Mining, and John Ralph at CRA, and John Hewson in Canberra, and Tim Fischer in the bush, and the mining industry generally, and Aboriginal extremists on the fringes, and bureaucrats everywhere, and an ugly and ignorant slice of public opinion, and God knows who else. Even within his own Government there are those who oppose what he is trying to achieve, including some within his Cabinet[754].

Nonetheless, the battle with Queensland Premier Wayne Goss was an intense confrontation filled with personal animosity[755] as well as policy differences. In his battle with the Prime Minister, Wayne Goss utilised the tools at his

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[751] Department of the Parliamentary Library 1993, op cit.

[752] Geoff Kitney, 'PM Offers Solution on Mabo', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 June 1993, p 11.

[753] Geoff Kitney, 'PM's New Australia Vision Hits a Wall at Mabo Brawl', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1993, p 11.

[754] Alan Ramsey, 'Mama Takes a Strap to Young Wayne', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1993, p 29.

[755] Goss' dominant faction in Queensland had, for example, backed Hawke in the leadership struggle.

disposal to resist the introduction of the Commonwealth's legislation. The power resources he called upon included a high media profile and the standing afforded him because of his leadership of a large state allowed him to lobby directly key Federal Government ministers[756].

By confronting State Premiers and significant businesses and lobby groups, Paul Keating was placing his Prime Ministerial authority on the line. Perhaps in recognition of this, he drove himself to the point of exhaustion to try and reach an acceptable agreement. Kitney wrote at the time that

> Keating had sat in the middle of all the competing interests and set out to build a consensus, layer by layer, starting with the bits on which all the parties agreed and then exhaustively working through to those on which there was greatest disagreement. Keating has probably never worked so hard on any policy issue. Certainly, no issue since he became Prime Minister has so tested his political skills and his stamina or involved such big political risks[757].

That the Prime Minister ultimately triumphed over significant political obstacles was seen as a personal political triumph, a gamble that had ultimately paid off, and an illustration of the power resources held by a skilful prime minister.

The ramifications for Keating's leadership were immediately observable. Because he was 'able to broker a deal after hours of talks which no group is totally happy with, but which virtually all can live with', his 'leadership strengthened and his prestige increased'[758]. Another commentator opined that the Prime Minister's 'standing in the Caucus has soared because of the deal he painstakingly brokered on Mabo, an issue which has become an article of faith for the Labor Party'[759]. A temporarily adoring caucus even passed a resolution of congratulations for a leader who had 'given Labor a sense of unity, new energy and a firmer sense of its direction'[760].

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[756] Alan Ramsey, 'Mama Takes a Strap to Young Wayne', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1993, p 29.
[757] Geoff Kitney, 'PJK Back From the Dead on Mabo', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 October 1993, p 11.
[758] Innes Willox, 'Deal Strengthens PM's Leadership', *Age*, 20 October 1993, p 6.
[759] Geoff Kitney, '24 Hours to a New Keating', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1993, p 1.
[760] Shaun Carney, Innes Willox, 'A Week is a Long Time in Politics', *Age*, 23 October 1993, p 15.

Despite subsequent criticism during the Howard Government's tenure, the Mabo legislation stands as a significant legacy of Paul Keating and his Labor Government. That Keating took such a personal interest in the Government's response, and staked so much of his authority and influence on a successful outcome, tells us much about the nature of prime ministerial power in this country. In this context Don Watson's analysis is particularly perceptive:

> Keating was the essential player: not because he had all the ideas, which he didn't; or because he was the supreme advocate and negotiator, which he was. It was because of the authority he brought to all negotiations. It was the prerogative of his office, but more important was the use he made of it. It came from what he called 'weight'[761].

Faced with resistance from parts of his own caucus and cabinet, State Governments and their leaders, business and large slices of the general community, Prime Minister Keating's Mabo response ultimately prevailed. It was a political victory that could not have occurred without the institutional 'weight' of the nation's highest elected office and without the political skill and determination of Paul Keating PM. Australian federalism provides an institutional and personal battleground for influence over policy. Skilful actors from the various Australian governments all impinge upon and affect greatly the power of the prime minister, and there is no guarantee that the PM will always prevail as he did in this instance.

Governing from the Centre

In addition to the above brief analysis of federalism and the legislative response to the Mabo judgement, this chapter has analysed in detail two key areas relating to Prime Minister Keating's ability to 'govern from the centre'. The first aspect of this analysis is of the advisory arrangements made available to Prime Minister Keating and how they were utilised. In this area it has been demonstrated that Keating relied on a small circle of trusted advisers, mostly in the Prime Minister's Office but also to a more limited extent in the bureaucracy and private sector. The arrangements were ad hoc rather than considered and coordinated, and relied heavily on Prime Ministerial whim and policy interests. Therefore the advisory structures were

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[761] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 434.

somehow heavily centralised without being coordinated and top-down. Key advisers exercised enormous authority and influence over the decisions of the Labor Government, without significantly interfering, in an institutional sense, with the other advisory bodies.

The second component of this chapter's analysis involved the Prime Minister's involvement in policy development. In this respect we know that Keating was an active and interventionist leader in relation to a number of key policy areas such as the economy, international relations, the Accord, native title, the republic and media policy. In other policy domains ministers were given latitude to develop and implement policy without excessive Prime Ministerial intervention. From the Mabo case study we learn further that, even when the Prime Minister staked his authority and influence on a policy outcome, the triumph of his view was not guaranteed. When coming up against alternative sources of power – in this case largely the states and business interests – success depends on the skilful wielding of the power that the highest elected office brings.

The most significant conclusion that can be drawn from this chapter's analysis is that, under Keating, the Office of the Prime Minister became the key institution of the Government, exercising more power than even the cabinet. Support for this argument is not difficult to find. Senior journalist Paul Kelly told this author that 'the PMO became absolutely the key decision-making unit'[762]. Bruce Chapman recalled how the PMO 'struck me as very powerful, in ways that surprised me. I thought that was partly a diminution of the power of cabinet, and the nature of Paul Keating ... Cabinet didn't seem to be to be that important'[763].

For more expanded views we can turn to senior PMO advisers Don Russell and Mark Ryan. The former justified the Office's power by arguing:

> I guess it's true that the Prime Minister's Office, and the Prime Minister, ended up having the dominant role in terms of strategy. Because what

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[762] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002; see also David McKenzie and Jane Hutchinson, 'Key Influences Behind the Power in Canberra', *Age*, 28 April 1993, p 25.
[763] Interview with Bruce Chapman, 4 December 2002.

tended to happen was the Prime Minister and his Office are picking off a menu of policy choices, strategic choices, political choices and they breathe life into some and blow death onto others. It's really setting priorities and strategy and resolving disputes, those sort of things end up very much the prerogative of the prime minister and his office[764].

Mark Ryan attributes the authority and influence of the Office to the speed with which decisions were required. He explained in an interview that

> there was a real sense that everything was being done, not on the run, but we needed to be nimble of foot and moving quickly. The times did not lend themselves to a lot of deliberative debate and considered discussion behind the cabinet doors. In that sense I guess the political imperative required us to move quickly and seize opportunities and act on them as they came along, without necessarily calling together a cabinet meeting and debating it[765].

A colleague of Russell and Ryan's, however, still saw the cabinet as the chief forum of the Government. Press Secretary Greg Turnbull warned against underestimating the importance of the cabinet, and argued that the PMO was 'not as powerful as the cabinet but it meets more regularly; every day, all day, and half the night. So it's the nucleus of the Government's power and thought and so forth'[766]. Other views come from those who were operating outside the PMO during the Keating Prime Ministership. Brian Howe remembers that 'Keating took very much his own counsel, I think his own office was where most of the discussions took place'[767]. Alan Ramsey wrote that it is 'this inner group - more than Cabinet, the Caucus or the bureaucracy -that Keating most relies on for political strategy and policy advice'[768].

The centralisation of decision making under Paul Keating, albeit only in terms of strategy and a selection of policy areas, differs markedly from the experience under Malcolm Fraser as analysed by Patrick Weller[769]. Fraser was a Prime Minister who was incredibly well-briefed right across all aspects of his Government's activities, and relied heavily on advisory structures and government agencies. He mastered information and used this superiority as the basis for his power over colleagues. In this respect Weller wrote that

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[764] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[765] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[766] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[767] Interview with Brian Howe, 12 June 2002.
[768] Alan Ramsey, 'Poll Focuses PM's Mind Ever So Sharply', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 May 1992, p 25.
[769] See Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, pp 22-34.

Fraser's 'authority and his capacity to win arguments about policy were based not just on his position, but also on his access to and mastery of information. He knew as much, and often more, about important policy areas as the responsible ministers'[770].

A more useful comparison, in this case, is between the Keating and Hawke offices. One who worked in both, Geoff Walsh, believes 'Hawke's office was run more conventionally and Paul's office was a bit more open, and was an evident contest of ideas ... because [Keating's] office didn't look and feel like Bob's office, it was [seen as] somehow less effective and less efficient'[771]. Aside from these perceptions, there were also significantly varied approaches to the Australian Public Service. Hawke's widespread reforms in 1987, creating 'mega departments' among other changes, were not matched by his successor[772]. Hawke, though, like Keating, retained a loyal and centralised staff. Keating himself once memorably described Hawke's staff as the Manchu Court, who 'had never been elected to anything' but 'thought they had'[773]. Though Hawke was less demanding of staff than either Fraser or Keating, he and his office nonetheless gave the Government a central focus and direction. Hawke was willing to provide other ministers and their departments much more latitude, only imposing some coherence at the cabinet stage[774]. He read enormous amounts of briefing material, and was across the detail of all facets of policy, but unlike Fraser this didn't mean he used that information to impose himself on his colleagues.

Paul Keating's advisory mechanisms and policy interventions represent a different approach to governing from the centre. He enjoyed the power over colleagues that allowed him to intervene when desired, but used this power sporadically. This returns us to the notion that Keating was reluctant to spread himself over all facets of the Government, unlike Fraser and Hawke, because of a fear he would spread himself too thin. His advisory arrangements, ad hoc and personally oriented, reflected his desire to be

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[770] Ibid, p 21.
[771] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[772] Department of the Parliamentary Library 1995, op cit.
[773] Australian Labor Party, *Labor Herald*, December 2003.

active and interventionist without interfering in all of his minister's activities. Prime Minister Keating governed the country from the PMO, with the assistance of a few trusted advisers, only on issues he deemed important enough to warrant personal attention. That he could freely choose when and where this would occur is an important lesson for this study of prime ministerial power.

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[774] Colin Campbell and John Halligan 1992, op cit, pp 17-18.

6

Throwing Grenades

I'm in the grenade throwing business. Occasionally I drop one beside my foot, but I get many direct hits[775].

The answer is, mate, because I want to do you slowly. There has to be a bit of sport in this for all of us. In the psychological battle stakes, we are stripped down and ready to go. I want to see those ashen-faced performances. I want more of them. I want to be encouraged. I want to see you squirm out of this load of rubbish over a number of months. There will be no easy execution for you ... If you think I am going to put you out of your misery quickly, you can think again[776].

Prime ministers rarely play significant roles in the debating of legislation, they attend the House of Representatives infrequently, and their executive is held only weakly accountable by parliamentary procedure[777]. The seemingly minor importance of parliament to prime ministerial leadership, coupled with an apparent decline in the utility of the legislature in deliberating national policy and administration, would make it tempting, though ultimately misleading, to conclude that prime ministers should look elsewhere for potential arenas of dominance. The parliamentary aspect of the leadership position remains vital to the continued political health of the prime minister. They are called upon to dominate the Opposition parties and personalities in parliament. In essence, 'every occasion is a performance, with backbenchers needing to be impressed, and with the leader on display'[778].

The formal tasks of leadership in the House of Representatives are few, but the potential for maximising authority, influence and the support of colleagues and the media is great. The prime minister is asked only to face questions from the Opposition and her or his own party - even this form of attendance

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[775] Paul Keating, quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p xvii.
[776] Paul Keating responding to John Hewson's question in parliament about why he would not call an early election, *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, pp 1002-3.
[777] For a discussion of the functions and roles of parliament, and of the institution in general, see John Uhr and John Wanna, 'The Future Roles of Parliament' in Michael Keating, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (eds), *Institutions on the Edge? Capacity for Governance* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2000).

can be limited and questions largely avoided - and attend ceremonial events. The forum is supposed to provide an avenue for the executive, including the leader, to be held accountable for their actions. A skilful prime minister will not only make a good account of themselves, they will also use parliament to define the political agenda, attack opponents, impress caucus colleagues, and reach out into the living rooms of the electorate. A not so skilful leader can be exposed in parliament as not up to the job, and may convince colleagues of the need for a replacement. So, despite parliament's perceived decline into irrelevance[779], in leadership terms it remains central. A prime minister's 'performance there is consistently being assessed'[780].

Parliament also offers prime ministerial *aspirants* the opportunity to display their wares. Indeed, this was one factor in the leadership transition from Hawke to Keating. George Jones, in this context, expresses the view that the reduction of formal prime-ministerial involvement in parliament provides useful opportunities for other ministers to shine. He writes:

> the prime minister's cabinet colleagues perform more in parliament and have more opportunities to enhance their reputations through a display of parliamentary expertise. They are able to win support from their backbenchers and build up their own followings, which enable them more securely to resist the prime minister's policy preferences, and even to appear to challenge the prime minister's leadership[781].

This is yet another compelling reason for prime ministers to put effort into dominating the House.

The prime ministerial power thesis, introduced in Chapter Two of this study, is relatively quiet on parliamentary leadership, concentrating more heavily on other institutions such as cabinet, caucus and the media. However, continuing a theme of the personalisation of leadership, it is argued that prime ministers are decreasingly answerable to parliament and are allowed to

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[778] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 178.
[779] A significant body of academic literature attributes increasing executive dominance of the parliament with the latter's declining influence. For example, see Jim Chalmers and Glyn Davis, *Founders' Folly: Parliament, the Executive and the Constitution* (Canberra, Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2001); see also John Summers, 'Parliament and Responsible Government' in John Summers, Dennis Woodward and Andrew Parkin (eds), *Government, Politics, Power and Policy in Australia*, (Sydney, Longman, 2002); and Ken Turner, 'Parliament' in Rodney Smith (ed), *Politics in Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1993).
[780] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 166.

ride roughshod over the standing orders, the Opposition, and traditional concepts of executive accountability. This is seen to be evidence of the growing power of prime ministers and their increasing scope to dominate the institution[782]. Making the executive accountable to the legislature by compelling ministers to come from parliamentary ranks, the argument goes, has not evolved as intended when the executive dominates the legislature[783]. In Riddell's words, 'a separation of powers is developing' because though 'the executive may still merge out of the legislature', 'the two are now increasingly distinct'[784]. Prime ministerial power is evidenced in, and is contributed to by, the decreasing relevance of the parliament, presenting significant opportunities for the exercise and display of prime ministerial power and personal leadership.

Paul Keating was the most dominant parliamentary performer of his time, and arguably the most devastating debater in Australian political history. In this respect his primal, aggressive and taunting approach to parliamentary combat marks him out as an Australian prime minister without equal. As one respected political commentator has written, 'Keating is a natural parliamentarian ... [He] loves the forum and turns it to advantage'[785]. Similarly: 'one enormous Keating advantage is his rhetorical punch, and his ability to turn a stunning phrase'[786]. His dominance in the House of Representatives led another journalist to write that 'the Opposition is only there in the capacity of straight persons so the star - and there is really only one - can look witty at their expense'[787]. According to Stephen Mills, 'Parliament was the perfect forum for his brand of brilliant and aggressive verbal skills – the brutal rejoinder, the ruthless verbal battery, the almost lyrical command of vernacular idiom'[788].

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[781] George Jones 1991, op cit, p 124.
[782] Ibid, p 112.
[783] See Jim Chalmers and Glyn Davis 2001, op cit.
[784] In Michael Foley 2000, op cit, p 309.
[785] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating and Whitlam – Progression on a Theme', *Age*, 23 March 1992, p 13.
[786] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating's Year At The Top', *Age*, 18 December 1992, p 9.
[787] Mike Seccombe, 'Almost Dubbed Hubbub and a Star', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 March 1992, p 2.

Like many aspects of Paul Keating's prime ministerial style, the origins of his parliamentary leadership can be found in his time as Treasurer and partially traced to the nature of the leadership challenge. As the chief head kicker in the Hawke Government, he could always be relied upon to take the fight up to the conservatives in parliament. When caucus installed Keating as leader in December 1991, Keating became, in effect, his own enforcer in the parliament. Indeed one compelling reason for supporting him over Hawke was his ability to dominate in the parliament, and the likelihood that he could defeat Hewson and *fightback!* in that forum, in contrast with the floundering Hawke. Even former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was driven to describe Keating as 'the parliamentary star which Labor had to enlist in order to stuff the stuffed shirts of the Opposition'[789]. Parliament became a powerful instrument for Keating to win over caucus[790] and establish a dominance over the Opposition that continued until the return of John Howard to the leadership early in 1995.

Prime Minister Keating's parliamentary language was delivered without restraint; witness his use of words such as harlot, sleazebag, clot, perfumed gigolo, scumbag, boxhead, stupid foul-mouthed grub, piece of criminal garbage, thug, gutless spiv, vermin, unrepresentative swill, pissant, dummy and dog returning to its own vomit[791]. However, despite this, there was a depth to his use of parliament, a sophisticated recognition of its utility as a forum to motivate his colleagues, differentiate Labor from the Liberals, and wage an intense winner-takes-all psychological battle with leaders and prospective leaders from the other side of the aisle. For Keating, prime ministerial power was a resource that could be mined within the walls of the House of Representatives.

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[788] Stephen Mills 1993, op cit, p 203.
[789] Peter Hartcher, 'Whitlam is Glad That Keating's in the Club', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1992, p 2.
[790] One conversation is recounted between Laurie Brereton and Frank Walker in which the latter concedes he has been won over to Keating by his early, dominant performances in parliament; see Sally Loane, 'Keating's Left-Hand Man', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1993, p 39.
[791] See David Jenkins, 'Political Odd Couple', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1993, p 10 and Bruce Jones, 'Keating V Downer: The Sparks Will Fly', *Sun Herald*, 29 May 1994, p 39.

Paul Keating knew well the potential, and possessed the skills and abilities to make parliament work for him and maximise his power. He was expected to dominate the parliament, and he delivered on this expectation. Relying on Keating's own metaphor, he got many direct hits. But at what cost? The grenades that landed beside his foot were products of his personal, combative style and the electoral turn-off this brought about, leading him to further limit prime ministerial appearances at Question Time[792]. His dominance of the House of Representatives and contempt for the political opponents who questioned his leadership were simultaneously great strengths and ultimate weaknesses.

In parliament Keating was predominantly the brawler, rarely the statesman, but ever the performer. This chapter analyses in detail the parliamentary aspect of the Keating prime ministership, and the 'unparliamentary' though sometimes entertaining, sometimes devastating, words and phrases he used to motivate his own troops and establish a psychological dominance over, successively, John Hewson and Alexander Downer. Here an analysis of Keating's views on parliament, debating style, questions asked of him, battles with Opposition leaders, and tactics designed to unsettle him is undertaken. The argument is that parliamentary dominance was vital in ensuring the continued support of the caucus and the ongoing psychological hold over Hewson and Downer. However, his aggressive demeanour and combative style was unappealing to the broader electorate. This led him to limit his parliamentary appearances, thus blunting one of Labor's most important weapons and nullifying the positive effects of his parliamentary dominance.

The Keating View of Parliament

From published and anecdotal sources, and from Paul Keating's own recorded impressions, we can get a sense of the way the Prime Minister attempted to utilise parliament as a source of prime ministerial power. John O'Callaghan, senior adviser to Kim Beazley as Manager of Government Business in the House and an adviser to Keating on parliamentary strategy, recounted how

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[792] See below.

Keating had 'this general view that if you could dominate in the parliament, you could dominate the political agenda of the country. To him parliament was the forum for explaining policy outcomes. Keating clearly understood getting his message out by dominating parliament'[793].

In the early days of the Keating Government, 'getting his message out' meant first winning the broader support from caucus and arresting the momentum John Hewson had established over Hawke. In this context 'he saw an urgent need to restore the government's ascendancy in the parliament, observing that when it started losing in the House of Representatives in the second half of 1991, it began to lose everywhere'[794]. Parliament became the vehicle for the rejuvenation of the Labor Government.

With the goodwill characteristic of a special Christmas adjournment speech, Keating outlined a positive view of the parliament in December 1992. The speech read, in part:

> I think this is one of the great chambers of the world. We debate and settle national issues here at great speed in comparison with other countries. Our debate is robust, and the nation knows what we think about things. It knows how the debate changes, how the issues are put, and how the weighting is made. It results in a lot of conflict, but I would like to think that we do not take the conflict beyond these doors – that is in a personal sense, although we certainly do in a policy sense[795].

This view followed from a speech Keating had given one month earlier, in what was essentially an apologia for the robustness of Australian parliamentary debate. In a speech at the Walkley Awards in Melbourne in November 1992 he argued:

> so long as Question Time is the televised spectacle of questions without notice being fired at ministers in the hope of getting them to publicly slip up, there will be severe pressures on nicety and decorum. And so long as it is also the forum in which the great questions of the day are fought out, it will be more than a game of croquet. It will be very often verbal war – and no-one prepared to go to war should fight it with less than total commitment[796].

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[793] John O'Callaghan interview, 20 March 2002.
[794] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 186.
[795] Paul Keating, *A Christmas thanksgiving*, Special Adjournment Speech, 17 December 1992, in Ryan 1995, op cit, pp 19-20.
[796] Paul Keating, *Political Life*, Walkley Awards, Melbourne, 27 November 1992, in Ryan 1995, op cit, p 14.

The last sentence, in particular, is indicative of the Keating approach. For prime ministers, parliament is a winner takes all pursuit, with power and position at stake.

While the Keating approach to parliament was boots and all, his commitment to the House did not go unquestioned by political adversaries. Predictably, Hewson charged in 1992 that the House, under Keating, had become an 'absolute shambles'[797]. Keating had, according to Hewson, by 1994, 'attacked the Senate as unrepresentative swill and said that it should be abolished', 'said that question time is a courtesy extended to the House by the executive branch of government' and 'walked out of question time when it got too torrid for him'[798]. Later in 1994, during the furore over the contents of the *Hawke Memoirs* and as a result of Keating's reluctance to answer questions on charges laid by the former prime minister, new Opposition Leader Alexander Downer told parliament that Keating 'is too self-important, too grand and too imperial to bother coming into the parliament'[799]. He added, 'the Prime Minister is drunk with power' and 'has a swaggering arrogance'[800]. Given Keating's susceptibility to charges of arrogance it is unsurprising that the media picked up on this theme.

The usual Keating response to such charges, characteristically, was to belittle Opposition attempts to scrutinise the Government. One example of this came later in 1994 in response to a long list of charges made by John Hewson. Keating's reply was sarcastic and dismissive of the Opposition Leader: 'as far as parliamentary scrutiny goes, in 1993 the Leader of the Opposition asked me 13 questions – we actually sat for 12 sitting weeks – so his batting average was just about one a week. That is the sort of scrutiny I am supposed to be running away from'[801].

Keating's decision to limit his appearances at Question Time is addressed in more detail later in this chapter. For now it will suffice to say that the

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[797] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1734.
[798] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 616.
[799] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 1803.
[800] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 1804.

Opposition, with some success, was able to paint the Prime Minister's attitude to parliament as one of detached arrogance. This was a negative view exacerbated by Keating's response to such charges, the media's perpetuation of allegations of arrogance, and his now well known and less than charitable or tolerant opinion of the 'unrepresentative swill' sitting in the Australian Senate.

The Senate acts as a significant brake on Australian executive government and on prime ministerial power. At no stage during the Paul Keating prime ministership did Labor control the numbers in the upper house, which meant legislation required the support of minor parties such as the Australian Democrats, a position that did not sit easily with Keating. His view of the Senate is neatly summed up by part of an answer he provided Peter Reith in the first year of his prime ministership. Keating said: 'the Senate has no right to obstruct the principal policies of the Government in the lower House; that is our view'[802]. This coincided with a number of opinions the prime minister provided subsequently. Michelle Grattan, then of the *Age*, quoted Keating in 1992 as saying the Senate was 'an impediment to the smooth operation of the parliamentary system'[803]. Grattan added, in a later piece, that 'Keating also brings to his attitude on the Senate the thinking of the House of Representatives, where if you're in government you're in control. Of course, he knows in his head that the Government lacks the upper house numbers and so can't ride roughshod over the Opposition and the Democrats, but he doesn't quite accept the reality'[804].

Tensions between the Prime Minister and the Upper House reached boiling point over the passing of the 1993 budget[805]. Faced with the prospect of the Senate refusing to pass his Government's budget, Keating was counterproductively savage in response. 'His approach to the problem of

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[801] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 617.
[802] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 2736.
[803] Michelle Grattan, 'PM Weighs In and Self-Destructs', *Age*, 5 November 1992, p 3.
[804] Michelle Grattan, 'Can Keating Make a Silk Purse from a Senate's Ear?', *Age*, 7 November 1992, p 2.
[805] See Liz Young 1999, op cit, for a discussion of the Senate's role in the negotiation of the 1993 budget.

Senate muscle-flexing over the Government's legislative program was to kick it in the groin'[806]. Keating's response to this particular challenge to his authority was characteristically brutal. The need to deal with the 'unrepresentative swill' in the Upper House, while unpalatable for Prime Minister Keating, was nonetheless a useful example of an institutional limit to prime ministerial influence.

Prime ministerial power resides in the House of Representatives and is limited by a non-compliant Senate. Keating's opinion of both houses is coloured by this fact. He saw the former as an opportunity for psychological dominance and a forum to rally his troops; the latter as a hindrance to good governance. Realising the potential, he made much use of the House of Representatives as a vehicle for caucus motivation and dominance of Opposition leaders lacking his parliamentary skill.

Question Time

Question Time – or Questions Without Notice as it is formally known - is the key event for prime ministers in parliament. For an hour or slightly more each afternoon the executive must face the probing of the Opposition's questions. John Uhr wrote that 'Question Time has often been described as Parliament's greatest piece of theatre, full of rehearsed set-piece confrontations interspersed with fiery improvisations'[807]. The stakes are high for all ministers, but the prime minister is especially responsible for instilling confidence in the caucus and making the most of opportunities to pound the Opposition. Keating was at his best in Question Time though also, commonly, at his nastiest. Here his performances at the dispatch box are analysed in the context of his attempts to motivate Labor backbenchers and demoralise the Liberal and National Parties.

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[806] Geoff Kitney, 'Shaping Up For 1975', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 1993, p 11.
[807] John Uhr, *Questions without answers: an analysis of question time in the Australian House of Representatives*, (Canberra, Australasian Political Studies Association and the Parliament of Australia, 1982), p 7. See also GR Reid and Martyn Forrest, 'Parliamentary Control of the Executive' in *Australia's Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1988: Ten Perspectives*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1989).

Preparation

Keating's preparation for Question Time was sombre and quiet, reflecting the seriousness of the task and an inner confidence. One adviser who observed the PM up close at these times, recounting a story he'd heard about Don Bradman quietly and broodingly eating lunch before going out to slaughter the bowlers, likened the approach to that of Prime Minister Keating. The same source remembered how Keating would 'generally just be sitting there with a pile of briefs beside him, and a group of key advisers, going through the briefs and just rehearsing what he was going to say. He was almost eerily cold, quiet, focusing on the issues'[808]. Don Watson recounts how Keating would sit 'at his desk which was in places half a metre deep in unsorted files' and 'ate his lunch and drank the tea Guy brought to him'. His preparation was cool, sometimes comical[809], giving little impression of the aggression that was to follow.

The relaxed attitude Keating took to preparing for parliamentary combat was recognised by a senior cabinet colleague. John Button, Minister for Industry and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, remembers (laughing):

> He had an extraordinary coolness about him. I remember once flying from Melbourne to Canberra with him, and the Government was in a bit of trouble - we always used to cop it at Question Time, you know, about

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[808] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.

[809] This is the story recounted by John Edwards 1996, op cit, pp 475-7: 'Twenty minutes before Question Time on one sitting day, light flooded the little grey courtyard outside the office. Inside, the Prime Minister sat behind his desk. He was eating his lunch on a tray. Despite our good intentions and his, the desk and benches behind him were now loaded with different piles of paper of uncertain pertinence... Four of us sat in chairs in front of the desk, which was again piled high with various sets of folders. Behind him on a shelf were two large red vases, a radio, a water jug and a row of books. Two more assistants sat on the couches in the centre of the office. We were drinking coffee from Styrofoam cups. The Prime Minister pushed his tray to one side and read one of our prepared question with its answer ... The Prime Minister began rummaging among his piles of paper on the desk, frowning. 'Where is that small stapler?' he moaned. He turned over the papers on his desk, piling them into new heaps. We looked concerned. Ashton turned over some papers near him. He found a green plastic pen, but not a small stapler. 'Where the fuck is it?' Keating demanded of no one in particular. He pressed a button on a bank of telephones. 'Linda, get me a small stapler, love.' He picked up the sheets of paper with the questions. 'This is good,' he said. 'I'll say, "the Honourable Member ...".' He laughed brightly, looked up at our grinning faces, then he frowned. 'Where's the yellow highlighter?' he asked. 'Jesus, what happens to them?' He began moving the piles of paper again. 'Where is it?' We craned forward a little in a display of sympathetic interest, although the novelty of this daily hunt had long worn off. We knew it would be found. In the stationery room Linda kept a crate of yellow highlighters and another of small staplers. One of us left to get a yellow highlighter ...'

> the pig farm and everything – I was sitting there looking at Question Time
> briefs and he sat there reading a motor sports magazine, all the way up.
> I thought shit, you don't give a stuff![810]

This was misleading. For Keating, preparation for Question Time was the calm before the storm.

Accounts from interviews for this thesis vary in their emphasis on the degree to which Paul Keating could 'get across' a written Question Time brief, though nobody suggested he was ill prepared for whatever was thrown at him by the Liberals and Nationals. Indeed, one Member of Parliament from the Keating era – a Liberal Party Member, David Jull – remembers Keating using a simple brief to devastating effect. Jull told this author that:

> The thing that I always thought was quite interesting was that when
> Keating came into the House, along with his folders and manuals of
> questions and answers, there was a usually a single sheet of paper which
> was laid to the side of it. They were the lines for the day. They were
> obviously pre-prepared. It was alleged at the time that Max Gillies used
> to write some of them. To watch the performance was always pretty
> theatrical. It usually started off with a line, and a pretty devastating line,
> that was followed by general destruction'[811].

Labor advisers recall the 'theatrical' and 'devastating' lines being rehearsed in the pre-Question Time meetings[812].

Questions Asked

The Opposition parties were also well prepared for Question Time in the House of Representatives; their questioning followed predetermined strategic lines of attack. The questions asked of Keating depended on the political environment, perceptions of ministerial incompetence or inappropriate behaviour, economic conditions, and the stages of the electoral cycle. Table 6.1, below, sets out in detail the types of questions asked of Keating by both the Government and the Opposition. Keating's ability to respond to attacks on the propriety of his colleagues and defend his Government's policy record was an important weapon in his prime ministerial repertoire.

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[810] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[811] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.
[812] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002, for example.

Table 6.1: Questions Without Notice to Prime Minister Keating

Issue	Year	From Gov	From Opp	Total
Aboriginal Affairs	1992	1	0	1
	1993	9	9	18
	1994	3	0	3
	1995	0	0	0
	Total	13	9	22
Communications and Transport	1992	5	5	10
	1993	1	8	9
	1994	0	10	10
	1995	4	4	8
	Total	10	27	37
Economy	1992	25	47	72
	1993	18	5	23
	1994	6	34	40
	1995	7	40	47
	Total	56	126	182
Education	1992	2	0	2
	1993	0	0	0
	1994	4	1	5
	1995	0	0	0
	Total	6	1	7
Electoral Politics	1992	0	7	7
	1993	0	0	0
	1994	1	1	2
	1995	3	5	8
	Total	4	13	17
Employment	1992	3	25	28
	1993	4	1	5
	1994	4	5	9
	1995	0	3	3
	Total	11	34	45
Environment	1992	0	5	5
	1993	0	0	0
	1994	1	3	4
	1995	0	2	2
	Total	1	10	11
Foreign Affairs, Trade, Immigration	1992	14	7	21
	1993	6	3	9
	1994	11	12	23
	1995	3	17	20
	Total	34	39	73
Health	1992	3	0	3
	1993	0	1	1
	1994	0	2	2
	1995	1	0	1
	Total	4	3	7
Industrial Relations	1992	14	6	20
	1993	1	0	1
	1994	3	3	6
	1995	9	6	15
	Total	27	15	42

Other Ministers[813]	1992	0	21	21
	1993	0	0	0
	1994	0	14	14
	1995	3	11	14
	Total	3	46	49
Republic, Flag, National Identity, Multiculturalism	1992	3	12	15
	1993	1	2	3
	1994	0	2	2
	1995	0	7	7
	Total	4	23	27
Sport	1992	1	0	1
	1993	1	0	1
	1994	0	0	0
	1995	0	0	0
	Total	2	0	2
State Politics and Government	1992	2	3	5
	1993	0	1	1
	1994	2	1	3
	1995	2	5	7
	Total	6	10	16
General Policy, Direction[814]	1992	11	9	20
	1993	3	0	3
	1994	3	0	3
	1995	3	2	5
	Total	20	11	31
Other[815]	1992	2	3	5
	1993	0	8	8
	1994	2	30	32
	1995	2	9	11
	Total	6	50	56
	Total	207	417	624

Prime Ministers inevitable attract the bulk of the Opposition's questions. Two-thirds of questions asked of Prime Minister Keating came from the Opposition, 417 in all out of a total of 624. Many concentrated on Keating's legacy as Treasurer. Economic questions from the Opposition, dominated by the topic of recession, were easily the most frequently asked (126 times). Employment also featured highly, with 39 questions from the Opposition relating to the unemployment figures. Other portfolio areas attracting considerable attention

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[813] Relating to Graham Richardson's shares in a radio station and his role in the 'Marshall Islands Affair'; Ros Kelly and 'sports rorts'; Gareth Evans' possible High Court appointment; Laurie Brereton; cabinet reshuffles; Carmen Lawrence and the 'Penny Easton Affair'.

[814] For example the One Nation policy package, which covered many portfolio areas and attracted considerable attention within the parliament and outside it; Keating's prime ministerial style; Creative Nation; 'national consensus'; Working Nation.

[815] Crime; donations; Keating's piggery; Thai teak table for the Lodge; business associates; Senate; ethics; Question Time itself; female genital mutilation; political appointments; Hawke Memoirs; casino, arts community, women's policy, constitutional reform; the speakership; 'national interest'; interest groups; the governor-general; same-sex marriages.

from the Liberals and Nationals included: foreign affairs, trade and immigration (39 questions); communications and transport (27 questions); and the republic, flag, multiculturalism and national identity (23 questions). Importantly, Keating was asked 46 questions about other ministers, predominantly relating to episodes of ministerial misconduct such as Graham Richardson's involvement in the 'Marshall Islands affair', Ros Kelly and 'sports rorts', and Carmen Lawrence and the 'Penny Easton affair'. The category in Table 6.1 listed as 'Other' (50 questions) includes diverse issues such as Keating's interest in his piggery, arts fellowships, business associates and various social issues.

The asking of 'Dorothy Dixers', a question directed to a minister from the Government's backbench, is commonplace, and provides an opportunity for the prime minister to speak on a matter of her or his choosing. Of all questions asked of Keating in the House of Representatives, 207 (33 percent) were from Labor MPs. The Labor backbench's priorities were issues such as: the economy (56 questions); foreign affairs, trade and immigration (34); industrial relations (27); and the Government's general policy direction (20). Not surprisingly, the performance of other ministers (3 questions) and employment (11 questions) did not feature prominently in this list of Dorothy Dixers compiled from the years of Prime Minister Keating's tenure.

Questions asked from both sides of the aisle reflected pressing political necessities and the ebbs and flows of the political cycle. Table 6.1, broken down into each year of the Keating prime ministership, shows the varying concerns of each year of parliamentary activity. While economic questions dominated the Opposition's Question Time plans, it was especially so in 1992 and 1995; the first year of Keating's prime ministership and the last year before the 1996 election. Predictably, questions regarding aboriginal affairs were asked only in 1993 because of the Mabo issue; foreign issues dominated the later years of the prime ministership; republicanism dominated 1992; and questions regarding ministerial impropriety were dictated by the timing of the issues uncovered. Very few questions were asked of Keating in the months following his unexpected 1993 election win. Giving the Prime

Minister a platform from which to extol the virtues of his Government's winning ways was perhaps too much for the shell-shocked Liberals and Nationals to bear.

However, the Opposition could, on occasion, rattle Keating with their questions in the House of Representatives, but only rarely. The most effective strategy to counter his dominance was to question the propriety and competence of his frontbench colleagues. This, on many occasions, got under Keating's skin, and an enraged Keating was not necessarily the image that Labor strategists wanted to see on the news broadcasts each evening. The scandals involving ministers Richardson, Kelly, Lawrence and Griffith provided useful fodder for an Opposition accustomed to being harangued by the Prime Minister at Question Time.

One spectacular example of Keating's lack of tolerance of any questions regarding ministerial performance and behaviour came early in his prime ministership with Opposition questioning of Graham Richardson over his interests in Sydney radio station *2HD*. Keating's abrupt ending of Question Time and speedy exit from the House led one commentator to write:

> The Federal Opposition finally has found out how to rattle Paul Keating. Rattle the mates ... They did it yesterday, by raising allegations about the propriety of Keating's most important political mate, the only bloke in town who could be described as a smarter and slipperier politician than Keating, Senator Graham Richardson ... Hewson's mob had barely applied any pressure at all, before Keating spectacularly spat the dummy, brought Question Time to an abrupt end and stalked out, leaving uproar behind[816].

Keating was similarly displeased with the focus on his ministers in subsequent years[817]. A related strategy, recounted by Liberal MP David Jull, was to ignore Keating and ask questions directly of junior ministers. Jull felt this 'frustrated Keating and got him quite worked up', which meant it 'wasn't a bad sort of strategy'[818]. Often Keating would respond to this scenario by taking it upon himself to answer the questions directed to his junior colleagues.

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[816] Mike Seccombe, 'A Rattled Keating Rounds out of Answers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 April 1992, p 6.
[817] See Chapter Four of this thesis for a more detailed examination of allegations of ministerial impropriety and the Keating response.
[818] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.

Batting Them Back

How Keating responded to the Opposition's questions reflected upon his leadership of caucus and the maintenance of Government ascendency in the House. The balancing act required of the Prime Minister was to dominate the Opposition without appearing arrogant. The first aspect of this task was usually performed by Keating with aplomb, the second less so.

Prime ministers' parliamentary strategy is heavily dependent on personal style and individual strengths. Keating employed numerous strategies in parliament. He sought to differentiate Labor from the Liberals and discredit the Opposition with slick put-downs and by listing the achievements of the Keating (and Hawke) Government. He sometimes threw in diversions such as the Australian flag and republican debates if under pressure or requiring a circuit breaker. He sought to paint the Liberals and Nationals as out of touch and not up to the task, highlighted internal dissension in the Opposition and pointed out the limited capacity of senior shadow ministers. Keating relied on these strategies, examined in more detail below, throughout his prime ministership, with varying success. His tone varied from sarcasm to contempt to enthusiasm for new initiatives, but the intensity of the attacks and the disdain for what he saw as an Opposition incapable of leading the country was consistently evident throughout.

A well-worn response from Keating to various Opposition charges was to turn the attention back to the Liberals and Nationals, and accuse them of lacking the political will to tackle the big issues. In pursuing this strategy, Keating was differentiating Government and Opposition on the grounds of political courage and policy ability. The following exchanges, all after questions from John Hewson, are illustrative of this approach:

> We will go back to giving them growth and employment, which you never regarded as a priority and which you were never able, either with wit or the intelligence, to produce[819].

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[819] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 16.

> This is how we will govern Australia – as we did in the 1980s – to get the growth back and with it a continuing growth in manufactured exports, a continuing change in the current account – all of the things you could have only dreamt about but never really hoped for. You come back here now with a package of miserable accountancy and you think that passes for real policy. You have got to be cracking jokes[820].

> That is the thing about the Liberal Party. It has had to be dragged to every progressive reform in this country by the Labor Party, by the only vehicle of social change, by us – it had to be dragged screaming ... We all know about you. You are basically unable; you are basically incapacitated; and you have always been the same[821].

Each of these quotes represent Keating in full flight, self-righteous about the achievements of the Government and dominating the Parliament with forceful answers to questions from the Opposition.

Characteristically, Keating often treated the personalities on the Opposition frontbench with contempt, doing little for his advisers' attempts to encourage him to appear more humble. An extension of his contemptuous approach was his propensity to let the House in on his strategy, and to extol his wares as the dominant performer in the parliament. During an answer to a Peter Costello question regarding interest rates Keating, addressing Tim Fischer, said 'Timmy, old son, by the time the election is on, this issue will be nailed nicely into the ground. I always like to limber up on these things – a bit of limbering – I like to limber up on them'[822].

Interjections rarely bothered Keating, indeed he often used them to warm to his theme. One Labor backbencher remembered, in particular, Keating taking interjections and 'turning them around, back to the interjector, to his advantage'[823]. Re-reading *Hansard* today it would appear that, rather than unsettling Keating, it focused his mind on the contempt he felt for the Opposition. On occasion, he would mock the interjector with a comment such as that made in 1992: 'I know it hurts you; why should it not hurt you? You elitist'[824].

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[820] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 18.
[821] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1967.
[822] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 1580.
[823] Interview with Les Scott, 4 April 2002.
[824] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 475.

In addition, of course, Keating was not averse to some bare-knuckled name-calling. Faced with constant interjections from Bruce Goodluck during an answer to a Dorothy Dixer from Janice Crosio, Keating snapped: 'you chattering little clown, why do you not shut up?'[825]. On a separate occasion, responding to a question from John Hewson, Keating retorted with: 'you asked the question; listen to the answer, you babbling fools'[826]. Words such as 'scumbag', 'pissant', 'foul-mouthed grub' and others became infamous through Keating's use of them in parliament. The steady stream of invective flowing from his mouth prompted John Howard to declare, in 1995, that Keating 'really is addicted to vitriol', 'he is absolutely hooked on the habit'[827]. The Keating brand of invective, offensive to some in the broader community, was essentially an extension of the Prime Minister's approach to parliamentary combat.

Keating's stance on issues such as national identity, the flag, and the Australian republic tempted his political opponents to charge him with employing controversial diversions to deflect attention from the economic main game. A Matter of Public Importance motion moved by John Hewson in 1992, for example, makes this accusation:

> The only reason why this Prime Minister is today trying to raise the issue of the flag and use it as a major political issue on a day-to-day basis is that he has lost the policy debate in this country ... He knew that we were about to respond on that statement [the One Nation package] in the Parliament, so that afternoon he went out and belted our British heritage as a mechanism for diverting attention from the failure – his incapacity, if you like – to develop an effective response to Fightback... The attack on the flag is to be seen as nothing more than a deliberate distraction from the main game, trying to keep attention away from the fact that this man is the architect of the recession[828].

It is unfair to argue that Keating's pursuit of these 'big picture' issues was merely a response to parliamentary pressure. However, Keating was nonetheless skilful at using these issues to unite Labor and prevent the recession being the only topic of debate in the House and of political conversation outside it.

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[825] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3532.
[826] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1993, p 310.
[827] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 3065.
[828] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, pp 1841-5.

The next weapon in the Prime Minister's parliamentary artillery was to belittle the questions asked by the Opposition, sarcastically encouraging them to do better. A related approach was the general criticism of Liberal-National policy and their efforts to promote it. One excellent example of this came in 1992, in response to a Tim Fischer question about mining, when Keating boomed:

> the fact is that the heyday, the salad days, of easy riding after the presentation of Fightback over the last couple of months during the parliamentary summer interregnum – those good days – are finished. Basically Fightback, as an economic strategy, is as dead as a doornail. You could not defend it; the Government blew it to bits; and the Treasury demolished what was left of it thereafter. Fightback is finished, and you are now asking me about Coronation Hill! Old son, you will need more – much more – than Coronation Hill to save you.[829]

On other occasions he was more direct, for example when he declared to John Hewson in 1992 'I have seen a lot of you off the course, and I will see many more'[830].

Throughout his prime ministership, Paul Keating started many questions with a general mocking of the question asked by what he regarded as the lesser lights on the Opposition front bench.   Some illustrative, and typically aggressive, answers included:

> What we see is a question that would not go a round or two at a Labor Party youth conference, that would not cut the mustard at a Young Liberal Party barbecue[831].

> There is one thing about those opposite in Question Time – once the script is written in the office nothing changes. It does not matter what the answers are and whether those opposite have been knocked into a cocked hat[832].

> frankly, one is battling to think up a pithy reply because the questions are just so bad[833].

> Intuitively, in the high professionalism of public life, you know that you are in front when you get a question such as this[834].

These comments were generally met with laughter from the Labor backbench.

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[829] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 839.
[830] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3092.
[831] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3958.
[832] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1395.
[833] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1396.
[834] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 390.

A related theme of Paul Keating's answers to Opposition questions was his obvious glee at having his hands on the levers of government. With undisguised pleasure Keating has said, in this context:

> You see, they can ask their questions, but they cannot take and do not like the answers. But I can tell you that much as it disdains you taking it, it gives me more pleasure giving it to you[835].

> You are so easily amused. One of the things I like about you is that you are so easily entertained over there and you are so easily amused. Keeping you there in this happy state of suspended political animation pleases me greatly. The fact that we can keep you there with a consummately low level of effort in a state of eternal happiness cheers me up no end[836].

Another oft-used Keating strategy in parliament was to highlight the divisions in the Liberal Party over policy and leadership. These answers struck right to the core of that Party's problems throughout the Hawke and Keating years. With brimming confidence, Keating would lecture the Liberal Party frontbench on the virtues of political unity. Ironic, indeed, given the nature of Keating's own ascent to the leadership. Regardless, tirades such as the following were not uncommon:

> With an increasing number of them beginning to think that travelling with the consumption tax is like travelling with a ticket on the *Hindenburg* heading towards a disaster – a Hewsonberg disaster[837].

> It is the young and the old against the dry and the cold in the Liberal Party[838].

> The Liberals cannot afford another leadership crisis, yet they cannot afford to stay with the leader they have. The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition has taken the Howard-Peacock virus and infected all the younger generation of parliamentarians[839].

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[835] A response to a question from Sharp about waterfront reform; *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 2259.
[836] In response to a Hewson question about interest rates; *House of Representatives Debates*, p 452.
[837] Responding to a Bevis question about tariffs; *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1068.
[838] Ibid.
[839] An answer to a question from Grace about international treaties; *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 517.

Peter Costello was a particular target for Keating's leadership-related attacks. Mocking him for twice declining to lead the Liberal Party, Keating was scathing:

> Don't be too noisy over there. You are so macho! Twice you have had a chance to take the Opposition leadership. The first time you rang your friend next to you and offered it to him. This time you sat overseas while John got it from Hawks Nest. When I told our caucus last year that you were a low altitude flier I was right, wasn't I? ... Underneath that barrel chest of yours is a caraway seed for a ticker[840].

> while our mate here from Hawks Nest was on the telephone, where is he? He is in London with Staley having scones at Claridges[841].

It is difficult to gauge the psychological effect these comments had on the Opposition at the time, though, given ongoing leadership tensions in the Liberal Party, and coupled with the supreme confidence of a leader in full flight, they are unlikely to have been easily dismissed by the then-disunited Coalition parties.

The final significant and observable Keating Question Time strategy was to play up the alleged incompetence and limited ability of specific individuals on the Liberal-National frontbench. Peter Reith, Tim Fischer and Bronwyn Bishop are singled out in these examples for some rough treatment:

> I understand, given the limited cerebral capacities of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition [Reith], that one subject at a time is about all he can comprehend[842].

> such a question could only come from a crude simpleton[843].

> As for the taker of the point of order [Sharp], if he is up here trying to outshine the Leader of the National Party [Fischer] he has only to be on his feet and dressed to do that[844].

> she [Bishop] is more to be pitied than despised; just leave her go[845].

These direct attacks on the capability of opponents also took place in the context of the one-on-one battle for the prime ministership. The questioning of Hewson, then Downer, then Howard's capacity to lead the Australian nation

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[840] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 477.
[841] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 1013.
[842] To Peter Reith, after a question about unemployment; *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1969.
[843] Responding to a Tim Fischer question about the Kokoda Trail; *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 1831.
[844] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 2263.

was a daily occurrence in the House of Representatives. This aspect of parliamentary combat is dealt with below, but first we turn to Keating's motivation of colleagues.

Us and Them

This chapter argues prime ministerial power in the Australian parliament can be accumulated by proving your wares to colleagues and by demoralising the Opposition. Keating was a master of motivating his own backbench. He did this, periodically, painting the contest in the House, for Government, and in the wider community, as 'us' against 'them'. His language was passionate and unmistakably working class and anti-elites. In parliament, Keating led Labor from the front, and basked in the approval of his caucus.

The starkest example of Keating's ability to rally the Parliamentary Labor Party behind him in parliament came in the early weeks of his prime ministership. He used the Opposition's passionate response to a controversial Keating speech to the Queen as an opportunity to paint the Liberals and Nationals as the people of yesterday, forelock tuggers to Britain. With a remarkable viciousness, the Prime Minister rose and, in detail, boomed:

> They started off with the Leader of the Opposition, with his back turned as usual, talking about, 'I never learned respect at school'. You see, I should never have said in front of Her Majesty the Queen of Australia that Australia was now trading with the Asia-Pacific area. I should never have said that we have independence from Britain and Europe ... I should never have made that remark about independence to the Queen of this continent. I should have had more respect... That was the golden age when vast numbers of Australians never got a look in; when women did not get a look in and had no equal rights and no equal pay; when migrants were factory fodder; when Aborigines were excluded from the system; when we had these xenophobes running around about Britain and bootstraps; and that awful cultural cringe under Menzies which held us back for nearly a generation.

Then, warming to this theme, he began talking about converting Old Parliament House into a museum and how the Government could

> put some of the cultural icons of the 1950s down there... The Morphy Richards toaster, the Qualcast mower, a pair of heavily protected slippers, the Astor TV, the AWA radiogram. And, of course, the

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[845] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 1553.

> honourable member for Wentworth [Hewson] and the honourable member for Bennelong [Howard] could go there as well … I was told I did not learn respect at school. I learned one thing: I learned about self-respect and self-regard for Australia – not about some cultural cringe to a country which decided not to defend the Malayan peninsula, not to worry about Singapore and not to give us our troops back to keep ourselves free from Japanese domination. This was the country that you people wedded yourselves to, and even as it walked out on you and joined the Common Market, you were still looking for your MBEs and your knighthoods, and all the rest of the regalia that comes with it. You would take Australia right back down the time tunnel to the cultural cringe where you have always come from… These are the same old fogies who doffed their lids and tugged the forelock to the British establishment … You can go back to the fifties to your nostalgia, your Menzies, the Caseys and the whole lot. They were not aggressively Australian, they were not aggressively proud of our culture, and we will have no bar of you or your sterile ideology[846].

The response from a Labor backbench demoralised by the recent leadership challenge was described as 'the most visceral roar' heard for years[847].

The effect of Keating's passionate denunciation of the traditionalists on the other side of the House of Representatives and their 'sterile ideology' had an immediate and lasting impact on the caucus and parliamentary observers in the media. Alan Ramsey, an opinion leader within the Press Gallery, wrote that 'Keating has been able to use it [the response to the Queen speech] with enormous effect to stamp his presence on an inherited Government and to distance Labor from a Hewson Coalition in terms everyone understands and many support'. Ramsey judged the episode as 'a wonderful distraction to unite behind Keating's leadership a Labor Party still uneasy about the change from Hawke'[848]. To David Day, Keating's aggressive strategy worked; 'by the end of the first week in Parliament, Keating was judged by one journalist as 'absolutely dominant'', 'his Labor colleagues were heartened by his aggressive leadership'[849]. The episode led journalist and Kim Beazley biographer, Peter FitzSimons, to comment that 'the best news for the Labor Party was that there were some signs that the switch from Hawke to Keating as Prime Minister was

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[846] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, pp 372-4.
[847] Quoted in Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 121. Watson also writes that from other quarters Keating's speech produced 'astonishing yelps'!
[848] Quoted in David Adams 1997, op cit, p 14.
[849] David Day 2000, op cit, p 423.

actually working – on the parliamentary floor, if not necessarily in the wider electorate'[850].

Keating's performance did not escape the attention of Hawke backers like Jeanette McHugh, who said afterwards that 'the Labor Party's been looking for that spark it needs. If it hasn't got it now, it'll never get it'[851]. Jim Snow remembered the speech had a 'very positive effect' because the new Prime Minister's 'use of history and the way he lampooned the Opposition was tremendous, inspiring'[852]. All this contributed to what became 'a dream end to the first Parliamentary week for Keating as Prime Minister'[853].

The practise of rousing his colleagues, demonstrated early in the Keating Prime Ministership, was one that continued throughout the remainder of the Labor Government. John O'Callaghan, an adviser with responsibility for parliamentary strategy, recalls how Keating 'used to try and get the backbench, when they were going out of Canberra after a fortnight's sitting, feeling good about the Government'. 'That would happen if Paul was on song; if Paul put on a good performance it would leave everyone feeling pretty good'. According to O'Callaghan, this was especially so when the Government was in trouble. The PM's advisers would 'have strategies to get Paul to lead the charge when we were in trouble, which was incredibly effective'[854].

The other way for Keating to rally the Labor caucus behind his parliamentary leadership was to employ class warfare to talk up the differences between the Government's defence of the workers and the Opposition's approach. Favourite targets were 'class traitors' such as John Hewson and John Howard, whom Keating considered to have betrayed their humble origins. Answering a Howard question about compulsory unionism, for example, Keating expressed the opinion to Hewson, Howard and the parliament that: 'having both come

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[850] Peter FitzSimons 1998, op cit, p 375.
[851] Mike Seccombe, 'Paul's Winning Friends and Influencing Enemies', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1992, p 4.
[852] Interview with Jim Snow, 26 February 2002.
[853] Mike Seccombe, 'Paul's Winning Friends and Influencing Enemies', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 1992, p 4.
[854] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.

from the wrong side of the tracks, you are so committed to proving to the blue bloods that your blood is bluer than theirs, that you have to sink the boot into ordinary people, that you will tear away at the guts of Australian unionism'. He then called them 'a couple of scrubbers from western Sydney who basically have taken out Liberal Party tickets and have said, 'Right, we are now in the establishment and we have been fitted up for the pinstripe suits; lets get our boots out into the ordinary people''[855].

Part of this differentiation strategy was to portray the Opposition as economic zealots who were mean and out of touch. An illustrative example is provided by Keating's musings on Liberal Party economic policy; 'the hard-headed sorts of policies which the Opposition is about – the Gordon Gecko school of thought that greed is good, devil take the hindmost and the survival of the fittest policies'[856].

The Prime Minister also often attacked the Opposition as elitists. In this vein, he talked about Liberals 'at the Bridgewater Tennis Club over cucumber sandwiches ... with their BMWs and their Porches lined up out the front'[857]. Downer's elitism - 'born with a silver cutlery set in his mouth' – was almost excused because it meant he had 'always held working people in contempt', whereas John Howard was attacked on this front with much more vigour. Keating, commenting on Howard's background, told the parliament that the 'member for Bennelong was a bowser boy at Canterbury. What a bowser boy has against working people and what he can gain by trying to grind their wages down has got me beat'. Later in the same speech, now addressing the entire Opposition, Keating cried: 'look at you ... You are mostly scrubbers. Most of you have not got any ability or two zacks to your name, but you still want to hop into working people, as if you were some sort of landed gentry. You are the remnants of Australia's failed upper class, the bunyip aristocracy hopping into working people and trying to cut their wages'[858].

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855 *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, pp 2910.
856 *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, pp 776.
857 *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, pp 900.
858 *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, pp 2153-4.

Prime Minister Keating often roused himself to a rage that the Liberal and National Parties, people he held in such low regard, considered themselves worthy of governing, of usurping Labor. Keating directed his contempt toward the Opposition and motivated his own colleagues with spirited invective and outrage at his opponents' claims to the throne. In this context Keating declared in parliament in 1995 that 'they [the Opposition] think they are the born to rule squad who will put working people back in their place. As I have said on many occasions, there is one little hang-up over here we have always had: we thought most of us in public life were born to rule them, and so far we have been going pretty well at it'[859]. At a personal level, this approach translated to brutal engagements with Opposition leaders from Hewson to Howard.

The Psychological Battle

The conflict between prime minister and leader of the opposition is the macro aspect of parliamentary performance. The two leaders, directly engaged face to face, are locked in a battle with the highest stakes. Reading *Hansard* and watching footage from the parliament during the Keating prime ministership the researcher is struck by the depth of feeling between the Prime Minister and the three opponents he faced down over the dispatch box. It is almost as if their very presence across the aisle riled Keating to the point where all of his aggression and, almost, hate, was funnelled in his opponents' direction. The psychological battles between Keating and, successively, Hewson, Downer and Howard were a spectacle in themselves; primal conflicts between a PM who never questioned his own ability and Opposition leaders whose leadership capacity he constantly challenged.

Hewson

John Hewson was widely touted as a political 'cleanskin', though the flip-side of these perceptions was that he was relatively weak and not politically

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[859] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, pp 2003.

experienced or savvy, traits Keating sought desperately to exploit[860]. Without exception, the commentary on the Keating - Hewson parliamentary conflicts highlighted the primal, intense, emotional aspects. One who was close to Keating has been quoted as saying that 'sometimes you watch Question Time and the hatred between those two blokes is just awful. I find it difficult to watch. It's discomforting. It's primitive'[861]. Don Watson, in his heralded biography, concurs. Keating and Hewson were fighting in 'a visceral, savage, exhausting brawl. They were like two brothers locked in mutual loathing which no-one, least of all the antagonists, could properly understand'[862]. The same author opined that 'an observer could be forgiven for thinking the two men provoked in each other the memories of childhood battlefields where all the most indelible lessons are learned'[863].

True to form, Keating relied on a selection of taunts and labels through Hewson's leadership tenure. When implying Hewson was an elitist or out of touch he would call him 'Professor'. When painting him as mean and uncaring, he would call him 'Gordon Gecko', after the unethical 'greed is good' character from the movie *Wall Street*. Some Hewson policies, for example tariff reduction, led to nicknames such as 'Captain Zero' (referring to zero percent tariffs). When Hewson took offence to something Keating said, the latter would call the former 'old glass jaw'[864]. Responding to a Dorothy Dixer from Janice Crosio about the cost of health care, Keating declared Hewson to be 'the most spiteful and cold-blooded leader that the Federal Liberal Party has ever presented to the Australian public'[865]. More simple and predictable were Keating's retorts to Hewson interjections: when the Opposition Leader asked about bracket creep Keating replied ''you are the only creep around here, brother'[866].

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[860] For profiles of John Hewson, see Norman Abjorensen, *John Hewson: A Biography*, (Melbourne, Lothian, 1993); and Christine Wallace, *Hewson: A Portrait*, (Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 1993).
[861] Quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 208.
[862] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 141.
[863] Ibid, p 20.
[864] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 223.
[865] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3216.
[866] For some reason Keating often called Hewson 'brother'.

The Hewson style attracted a significant portion of Keating's attention in his Question Time answers. He seemed particularly horrified that Hewson was receiving kudos for being an outsider, a non-politician. Rhetorically, Keating tried to bring an end to this perception. Two examples are illustrative of this. The first came in 1992 when Keating argued: 'you thought you had a dream run – you know, down the slope, one ski, no hands – for two or three months, until finally you ran into a small forest'[867]. Later that year, after a Hewson motion of censure against Keating he continued in a similar vein: 'Gone now are the images of the cool, urbane person of yesterday. Gone now is the little golf putt on a Sunday or doing something else; the charming little doorstop, the understated language. The slightest bit of pressure and, bingo, out jumps a jittery, jumpy, cat-calling person'[868].

The Liberal Party's key policy plank – *fightback!* – also attracted considerable prime ministerial attention, mostly directed towards the man who would be held ultimately responsible for its political and electoral fate. Spectacularly, Keating boomed in parliament in 1993, after retrieving his copy of the Opposition's policy from his drawer: 'Here it is, Fightback – Acme Fightback, the old Acme Fightback. Wiley C. Coyote blew it up. He got the Acme Fightback, opened it up and – boom! – away he went. Boom! T-woo! Away he went'[869]. After Hewson lost the 1993 election, due at least in part to the GST component of *fightback!*, Keating mocked his return to the source of the Opposition's electoral disaster. The Prime Minister said in 1994 that 'it is like Bonaparte going back to Waterloo. Not content to lose everything, he would go back and try to lose a bit more[870].'

Hewson's Question Time performances and priorities also attracted the Prime Minister's attention. In 1992 he accused the Opposition Leader of running 'straight back to the office' to 'tap out a little statement as an apologia for his performance at Question Time'[871]. A multi-pronged prime ministerial attack followed from a Hewson question about a new expensive, foreign piece of

[867] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 474.
[868] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 579.
[869] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1993, p 519.
[870] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 809.

furniture for the Lodge. Keating's response began with a question of his own about Hewson's priorities: 'there are three national issues this week – Mabo, APEC and industrial relations. What has this guy to say about it? He is onto dining room tables at the Lodge. He is on the really big issues'. Next he played up leadership tensions with the observation that 'he really is in trouble over there. Is it any wonder that Bronwyn Bishop is after him?' The typically blunt Keating-esque crescendo was 'do you want to hear the answer, dummy, or not?'[872]

On occasion, the psychological challenge was made by Keating even more directly. The most famous and illustrative example of this was when the Prime Minister declared to the parliament his wish, reproduced at the outset of this chapter, to 'do Hewson slowly'. These were the direct declarations of war that usually elicited loud roars of approval from the Labor side of the House. Keating knew the value of these remarks, and sometimes returned to the more devastating ones:

> The Leader of the Opposition has been thinking about that remark – about doing him slowly. I have no doubt that when he is into brekkie in the morning or running around the lake he is thinking about it. It really got up his nose. He keeps coming back to it. He would like to be relieved of the pressure by me saying to him, 'Look, don't worry, I will take you out of this minefield, this hazy area, this twilight zone of contempt for you within your Party - ... of this questioning about you within your Party; I will give you your shot at history now'[873].

In words just as intense and direct, Keating also stepped up the pressure on Hewson with devastating lines such as: 'let me make it quite clear: there will be no slithering, sliding, backsliding and hiding by the leader of the Opposition. When he lifts a rock, I will either be under it or I will have been there. I will be there, chasing him down, wherever he tries to go'[874].

Sometimes the psychological challenges were more subtle, even whispered across the table. John Edwards, Keating staffer and biographer, recounts one conversation between the two key protagonists. According to Edwards, at the end of Question time on a September day, Keating 'leaned over to Hewson.

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[871] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 568.
[872] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1993, pp 2866-7.
[873] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3272.

'You're white,' he said. 'Your face is white. You can't take it.' 'I can take care of you' Hewson said. 'No, you can't,' Keating replied, leaving. 'Your face is white'[875]. Other times Keating's declaration of dominance were louder and more public. After the 1993 election win Keating lectured Hewson by saying 'let me tell you this, brother: I will round you up like a sheepdog come the next poll just like I did last time'[876].

Hewson employed some simple, but largely ineffective, tactics to try and derail Keating's torrents of parliamentary abuse. He would either turn his back on Keating or deliver whispered taunts across the table. David Jull, Liberal MP for Fadden and a frontbencher under Hewson, remembers how 'when Keating was raving you'd just start chatting among yourselves, obviously taking no notice of him'. According to Jull, this used to infuriate Keating' because 'he'd rather see the whites of the eyes and see what effect the devastation has'. The second ploy involved Hewson 'back-chatting him'. However, 'some of it was pretty ordinary sort of stuff'. Hewson would call the PM a 'loser' and a 'grub'. 'That was the standard of it. And that was the problem, it wasn't very effective. It was just a constant chatter all the time'[877].

What did Keating's performances look like from Hewson's own side of the parliament? Jull recalls: 'it could be quite devastating at times'. He continued: 'Hewson was an interesting character within himself. He was a deep thinker but he wasn't terribly political, as such. So in that respect quite often it became a bit unbalanced, in terms of the capacity to retaliate. Keating at his best was very much in command'. Jull's final judgement was that, though 'Hewson had a fairly tough skin', 'it was obvious that sometimes it was fairly devastating'[878].

Probably the best description of Keating – Hewson parliamentary conflict comes from Don Watson who, in *Recollections*, wrote:

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[874] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 2742.
[875] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 496.
[876] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1993, p 512.
[877] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.
[878] Ibid.

> Politics is a game of the emotions, it is psychological war and is therefore very difficult to keep the child from stepping up on behalf of the man. Again and again Hewson would ruin his argument by lurching into the invective he learnt at school. In the House he took to sledging. In a voice loud enough for Keating to hear, but not the House microphone, he called him 'loser'. He turned his back and spoke to his colleagues, or at least pretended to, when Keating had the floor. It was worth reminding the Prime Minister as he left for Question Time that his opponent might have such a hatred of him, an outward show of calm, or humour, a big smile – anything that suggested Keating was at home in the Prime Minister's job – and Dr Hewson's hatred might, for all political purposes, consume him. 'That's right,' Keating would say as he went out the door, 'and you know I don't hate *him*. He's just a poor dumb bastard, that's all he is'[879].

If Keating didn't hate Hewson then he did an admirable job of convincing public observers of the contrary.

John Hewson was largely unsuited to the daily barrages of psychological abuse in the House of Representatives. At the end of Hewson's tenure as Leader of the Opposition, Barry Jones, then President of the ALP, called Hewson 'a technocrat who did not know how to use Parliament effectively. He was a man over whom Paul Keating assumed a crushing psychological ascendancy'[880]. Partisanship aside, this seems an apt judgment. While Hewson's performance outside the House could, at times, be impressive, in parliament Keating well and truly owned the Opposition Leader. We know this because of the body language Hewson showed during Keating tirades and the strategies he employed to combat them. Hewson often had his back turned, or wouldn't ask Keating questions (especially after 1993), or kept himself busy by talking with colleagues. Keating alluded to this in 1992 when he said of Hewson: 'he asked the question and now, as always, he has a little conference, a little conversation. He is psychologically unsuited to reply'[881]. He never seemed to fully engage the Prime Minister across the floor, never operating on the same psychological level. Keating knew this and played on it, taunting Hewson. While Hewson was beating Keating in the polls, Keating was thrashing Hewson in the parliament, establishing a psychological dominance that continued right through until Hewson's fall from the leadership in 1994.

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[879] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 129.
[880] Geoffrey Barker, 'Downer Ends the Paul Keating One-man Show', *Age*, 4 June 1994, p 21.
[881] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 373.

Downer

Parliamentary exchanges between Paul Keating and Alexander Downer lacked the passion of the earlier Keating – Hewson clashes, but the pursuit of parliamentary dominance nonetheless produced some sparks. The consensus among those interviewed for this thesis appears to be that Downer did himself no favours and, though Keating did him untold damage in the parliament, his demise was all but assured in the course of Downer's broader activities. One of Downer's colleagues articulated the situation thus: 'Downer wasn't there terribly long' and his 'problem was that some of his own comments didn't help him out. Keating then took over and the whole thing was an absolute disaster. Thankfully it didn't last too long'[882].

Given Downer's disastrous leadership of the Opposition, one comment from Geoffrey Barker is interesting and now almost comical. Barker declared that 'Paul Keating's virtually unchallenged domination of national politics is over'. He continued: 'In a crucial achievement, Alexander Downer demonstrated in his first week as Opposition Leader that he is as effective and as tough as the Prime Minister on and off the floor of Parliament'. By striking Keating on 'two issues at the centre of Labor's ideological agenda: the distribution of income between poor and rich and the design of the Australian flag' Downer was able to elicit 'ill-judged and unconvincing' responses from the Prime Minister[883]. The reality, over time, diverged greatly from this premature judgement of Downer's parliamentary prowess.

Though Alexander Downer's leadership of the Liberal Party was short, Paul Keating still had some opportunities to develop clear lines of parliamentary attack. Don Watson saw the task as 'hot-riveting the Melbourne Club to Alexander Downer's arse once and for all'[884], which meant making much of the Opposition Leader's privileged and moneyed background. This is what led Keating to state that Downer was 'born with a silver cutlery service in his

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[882] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.
[883] Geoffrey Barker, 'Downer Ends the Paul Keating One-man Show', *Age*, 4 June 1994, p 21.

mouth'[885]. In this context Watson differentiated Downer from his predecessor by writing: 'Hewson was Keating's natural enemy; Downer was his natural prey'[886]. Downer was easy meat for a re-elected Prime Minister on the prowl.

It would be making too much of Keating's parliamentary prowess to argue that he was solely responsible for Downer's descent into the depths of public opinion. Having said that, Keating – Downer parliamentary exchanges nonetheless appear devastating. Jim Snow, Labor backbencher, expressed the view to this author that, once Keating saw that Downer was on the way out and couldn't be propped up, he figured he may as well collect some of the credit for the Opposition Leader's destruction[887]. Mark Latham, inheritor of Keating's attack-dog persona in parliament, concurs. He believes Downer 'fizzled out under the weight of his own stupidity' and 'Keating was just getting his rhythm going when Downer departed'. Latham's conclusion was that 'if Downer had stayed it would have been the greatest massacre ever in the parliament'. 'Downer was falling apart and Paul was trying to work out how to dismantle him completely'[888].

Keating's attacks on Downer centred on weakness and elitism. He used again a name for the Opposition Leader - 'Shirley Temple'[889] – that he'd used earlier, in 1993, and called him 'a mean-spirited, bitchy little Opposition leader'[890]. Keating also labelled Downer the 'most foolish political leader of this country since Billy McMahon'[891]. Later in the year, Keating returned to this charge in parliament. Answering a Peter Costello question about the *Hawke Memoirs*, he turned on the Opposition Leader, declaring: 'the other day I said that he is the most foolish political leader since Bill McMahon. I now apologise to the McMahon family. This fellow is, by a long margin, the silliest person ever to have occupied that seat'[892].

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[884] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 493.
[885] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 2006.
[886] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 494.
[887] Interview with Jim Snow, 26 February 2002.
[888] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[889] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1993, p 781.
[890] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 2522.
[891] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 926.
[892] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 2001.

The gathering contempt for Alexander Downer became more and more obvious as time wore on. One article by the *Age*'s Mark Baker, ominously titled 'Keating Attacks and Downer Doubts Rise' describes in detail a Prime Minister going for the jugular. Baker recounts how 'in Parliament, Mr Keating launched a withering personal attack that left the Opposition Leader blustering'. The article continues: 'If all this were not bad enough for Mr Downer, Mr Keating - seizing upon the fallout from the central Australian trip - yesterday climbed all over the Opposition Leader during his first appearance in Parliament after the winter recess ... Moving into sarcastic overdrive, Mr Keating pilloried Mr Downer as a "sook" who had enjoyed "the greatest sleigh ride and honeymoon in the history of politics in the country" but had gone into hiding after his stocks plunged in the polls'[893]. Keating bullied and intimidated Downer increasingly until the latter's fall.

As time wore on, and Downer appeared increasingly ridiculous as an alternative prime minister, Keating became more and more dismissive of his counterpart's wares. On the ABC's *Lateline* program he boasted that dealing with Downer was like 'like hitting balls coming in slow motion'[894]. For the Liberals, relief, in the form of the general deterioration of the Keating Government and the resurrection of John Howard, was at hand.

Howard

John Howard returned to the Liberal leadership early in 1995, giving Paul Keating the third parliamentary opponent of his prime ministership. While Keating drew upon similar reserves of confidence, arrogance and contempt in his bid to defeat Howard in the House, the Government's standing in the polls was declining to the point where the new Opposition Leader could afford to withstand parliamentary attacks from the Prime Minister without desperately trying to answer every charge or respond in kind to Keating's aggression. In short, the boundaries of the battle between Howard and Keating differed

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[893] Mark Baker, 'Keating Attacks and Downer Doubts Rise', *Age*, 26 August 1994, p 4.

greatly from the conflicts immediately past. For Howard, a parliamentary draw counted as a win. Howard knew the electorate was decreasingly enamoured of the Prime Minister, and could afford to absorb the invective coming at him across the dispatch box.

Looking at the *Hansard* record of proceedings in the House of Representatives it appears that Keating always regarded Howard as a figure likely to return to the Liberal leadership. Indeed, even during John Hewson's tenure, Keating taunted Howard (and Hewson) with:

> John, I have to admire this about you: you have been here 20 years, but you always have the General's baton unsheathed in the knapsack. It is always there. You are always ready to be dragooned into service. The fact is that hope springs eternal within the honourable member for Bennelong. He has a sneaking idea in his heart of hearts that he is better at the business of politics than the Leader of the Opposition is[895].

Later, while Alexander Downer was Leader of the Opposition, he returned to the theme of a Howard return. Keating warned the Liberals that, 'if they put the member for Bennelong up, we will come after him so damned hard. If you think I was white-hot in 1986-87, you ain't seen nothing yet'[896]. Once Howard returned to the leadership Keating took the credit for keeping the new leader in the wilderness for so long. Menacingly, Keating told the parliament that 'one thing about the professionalism of public life is that you know when you have been hurt and you know who hurt you'. Howard, he added, 'knows who hurt him, who kept him over there'[897].

The Prime Minister's parliamentary strategy for establishing an ascendency over John Howard involved painting the Opposition Leader as old and tired, and simply another to be disposed of by the Prime Minister. The Keating estimation of Howard is neatly summed up by the *Age*'s Innes Willox, who wrote early in 1995:

> Mr Keating 's views of Mr Howard are blunt: he is a recycled yesterday's man; a representative of a bygone era, of the tariff wall; slavish support for Britain; universal two-parent families and white picket fences. Mr

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[894] Bruce Jones, 'Can Keating Still Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like A Bee', *Sun Herald*, 26 June 1994, p 35.
[895] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1992, p 3271.
[896] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1994, p 3870.
[897] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 3697.

> Howard, he says with a dismissive wave, would take Australians on an unwanted trip down the time tunnel to the 1950s of Sir Robert Menzies[898].

These were the lines Keating pursued in the parliament, with a delivery as strong and as contemptuous as ever.

An intensely pursued theme of Keating's parliamentary attacks on John Howard related to Howard's traditional and conservative social views. His approach led the Prime Minister to label the Liberal leader as 'out of your age and out of your depth' and 'a remnant from days gone by'[899]. This followed an earlier attack, along similar lines, where Keating sledged the Opposition Leader with the comment that 'the thing about John Howard is that Australia has passed him by. His defence and foreign policy speech last week could have been given by Harold Holt. It was a disgrace for a modern Australian politician'[900].

A second key theme was Keating's view that Howard was simply the next in a line of Opposition Leaders to be toyed with and disposed of by the PM. In this context, for example, responding to a Howard censure motion, Keating declared:

> It was not by accident that the Liberal Party passed over John Howard when John Hewson lost the last election. It was not by accident they passed over John Howard to go to Alexander Downer after John Hewson was removed. He is the Liberal Party's third preference but in his arrogance he wants himself to be Australia's first preference[901].

A similarly contemptuous diatribe came later that year when Keating told parliament: 'I have had to knock over two of them in this parliament. Now I am on to my third. Dare I say: I think that is something of a record, banging over two Opposition leaders in one parliament and working on the third. He is ageing very nicely'[902]. On another occasion Keating informed Howard: 'you are running out of puff faster than your curly-headed young mate behind you.

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[898] Innes Willox, ''Honest John' Widens His View On Compromise', *Age*, 16 January 1995, p 13.
[899] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 2161.
[900] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 2669.
[901] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 385.
[902] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 3696-7.

You are running out of puff in a couple of weeks; it took him at least a couple of months'[903].

John Howard was tougher in the parliament than his immediate predecessors, and the political environment suited his style. With the deterioration of Labor's standing in the opinion polls came a comfort level for Howard and a preparedness to withstand Keating's attacks. The Opposition Leader knew well that all that was required of him was to present a small target and attempt from time to time to get under the Prime Minister's skin. He did this effectively, for example when he asked Keating after the disastrous 1995 Canberra by-election loss: 'is the member for McMillan, who holds his seat by 573 votes, right in criticising you for failing to consult colleagues when your politically disgraced colleague, Ros Kelly, decided to jump ship?[904]'. Another Howard question asked the absent Keating 'why will Australia's part-time Prime Minister not stop hiding in his office and come in here now, provide answers for the mess he has created and end his contemptible arrogance towards the elected representatives of the Australian people?[905]'. Apparently this elicited 'thunderous applause from the public galleries'[906].

When asked by the author why Howard's experience in parliament differed from that of his defeated and replaced colleagues, David Jull expressed the view that Howard was simply 'a different kettle of fish' because 'he had a hide as thick as a rhinoceros' and Keating's barbs 'just had no effect'. This 'used to infuriate Keating as well, that he couldn't get the bite out of Howard that he got out of the others'. Jull's final analysis of Keating versus Howard in the 1995 parliament? 'In terms of pure parliamentary entertainment, Keating's effort on Howard wasn't as amusing as on the others. Maybe because of the nature of John Howard, he's more bland and doesn't have the quirkiness of the other two'. Also, 'Howard didn't bite, he held his ground, maintained his dignity, came in with a bit of policy, but nothing too much to allow another

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[903] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 1461.
[904] *House of Representatives Debates*, 1995, p 2131.
[905] Mike Seccombe, 'Back to the Bearpit', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1995, p 5.
[906] Ibid.

onslaught'[907]. The lay-low approach served Howard well right up until parliament's adjournment late in 1995.

The more Howard could provoke Keating, and the nastier that the latter appeared on nightly television news snippets of Question Time, the greater the chances of the Prime Minister self-destructing. Keating rarely got under Howard's skin because the resurrected leader was more experienced and knew he could coast into government on the back of popular discontent. Howard could quietly taunt Keating, leaving the PM with two unappealing options: either attack Howard and risk a popular backlash or back off from the style of parliamentary conflict he had perfected. The outcome, according to Mark Latham, was that, though 'Paul always had it psychologically on Howard', 'it was just a matter of getting the traction'. 'You could almost see at the end of every Question Time that Howard was relieved that he hadn't been mauled as badly as he could have been – that Paul wasn't right at him'[908].

The Down Side

Though Keating successfully motivated colleagues, raised morale on the Labor backbenches, and scored many psychological points off, especially, Hewson and Downer, there were significant costs associated with his parliamentary style. Few commentators or those interviewed for this thesis questioned the Prime Minister's parliamentary dominance, though some are quick to point to the down side of his approach. A former senior member of the Opposition, Ian Sinclair, said, in this respect: 'I certainly respect his parliamentary capabilities, although I totally oppose some of the ways in which he uses his parliamentary skill. I think he belittles himself and the institution by personalising the debate unnecessarily'[909]. Day argues Keating 'was the despair of advisers who were unable to soften his streetfighting persona which, after all, allowed him to exert dominance on the floor of the Parliament.

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[907] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.
[908] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[909] In Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 66.

Unfortunately, Keating's pungent language and aggressive demeanour had a negative effect on many voters'[910].

Keating could be undisciplined in the parliament, which fed a public perception of the Prime Minister as aggressive and arrogant. The incident in 1995 where Keating threw a document at the Liberals across the table is unlikely to have been met with much approval in the electorate. Nor could regular footage of a ranting Prime Minister on the parliamentary warpath. This view led Alan Ramsey to observe that Keating's real problem was himself, because, for example, 'there was a front page picture in the Melbourne *Age* yesterday which showed a wild-eyed Paul Keating ranting and raving at the Opposition in Parliament on Thursday afternoon. It said all that needs saying about the Prime Minister's often ugly behaviour these days'. Ramsey continued, referring to news film from the same day: 'I don't know what the tens of thousands of viewers who watch the highest rating television news in the country must have thought of their Prime Minister, but it wouldn't have been friendly, I'm sure'[911]. On another occasion the same commentator, while praising Keating's role in the Mabo and budget debates ('Keating at his best'), called 'his bullying arrogance towards Parliament' 'Keating at his worst'[912].

John O'Callaghan again offers a perceptive analysis of the costs and benefits of Keating's grenade-throwing approach to the House of Representatives. He believes 'any personal attack by him on Howard or Hewson or Downer or Bishop, yes it would make the backbench happy but it used to have a fairly negative impact in terms of perception of people out in the electorate'. 'A 30 second grab of Keating', according to O'Callaghan, could be 'quite a turn-off. It was not a good perception and, over time, it wore away at his credibility. He dominated the parliament but in the process he gave the wrong message out

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[910] See Chapter Eight of this thesis for analysis of Keating's opinion poll figures and, most notably, the average percentage of respondents who considered Keating arrogant, a perception no doubt exacerbated by his parliamentary performances. See also David Day 2000, op cit, pp 429-30; and Peter Walsh 1995, op cit, p 286.

[911] Alan Ramsey, 'Deals, Not Elections, In The Air', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1993, p 31.

[912] Alan Ramsey, 'Comeback Kid Puts His Stamp on Things', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October 1993, p 35.

to the community. In the main the community doesn't like people being vicious at other people'[913].

In recognition of the costs of his combative parliamentary style, the Prime Minister began early in 1994 to limit his appearances in Question Time to only twice a week. Keating and some of his advisers thought it more effective for the PM to utilise daytime television and radio as his outlet to the electorate rather than have them see him only through the lens of parliamentary conflict. According to one commentator, Keating 'sees it as going on the offensive, giving him more time to muster his support in the community by appearing at lunchtime functions and smiling warmly through television spots during the blue-rinse hours'[914].

This strategy was not without detractors. Geoff Kitney reported on one meeting in which

> most of his Cabinet colleagues were dismayed when Keating told them on Monday of his plan to drastically reduce the amount of time he was required to be in Parliament. The Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, said Keating was Labor's weapon against the conservatives and sheathing it would be a very serious mistake. Graham Richardson said Keating had John Hewson completely at his mercy in Question Time and it would be stupid politics to give up that advantage[915].

Mark Riley concurred with the cabinet ministers, writing in February 1994 that 'it is clear it is not the Government that stands to profit from his absence, given Keating 'hits the Opposition targets so much more than anyone else'[916]. Apart from missing opportunities to attack the Opposition, there was also another negative effect of the Prime Minister's decision to limit appearances. According to David Day, 'it simply confirmed the aloof and autocratic image that many people had of him'[917].

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[913] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[914] Mark Riley, 'Keating Makes A Meal Out of A Coalition Stew', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1994, p 6.
[915] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating Will Be Quiet But No-One Will Sleep', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1994, p 11.
[916] Mark Riley, 'Keating Makes A Meal Out of A Coalition Stew', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1994, p 6.
[917] David Day 2000, op cit, pp 430.

Some staffers have since commented that Keating's office should have voiced their concerns over the strategy from the start[918]. The decision, nonetheless, was made because of the very real concern that Keating's combative parliamentary style was costing the Government votes. The counter-argument can be made that putting Keating on a leash was counter-productive, and allowed the Opposition a free ride in the parliament. Either way, the downside of Keating's prime ministerial style in parliament led to a conflict between the benefits of establishing psychological dominance over leaders and motivating colleagues, and the electoral costs that coverage of the House of Representatives likely entailed.

Throwing Grenades

Prime ministers can accumulate power and authority within their own party and over the Opposition by appearing dominant in the House of Representatives. While the prime ministerial power thesis is reasonably quiet on the role of parliament, particularly in comparison with the media, cabinet and party, its role is nonetheless central to the job of PM. The spotlight is increasingly on the prime minister, who must perform in that forum to secure and maintain caucus approval and Party advantage.

Unsurprisingly, given the contrasts already drawn between the two men, Prime Minister Hawke's approach to parliament differed markedly from Keating's. Stephen Bradbury, for example, described, under Hawke, a 'somewhat mixed and distant relationship with the parliament... parliament was very often relegated from its traditional role at the epicentre of the political process in favour of Hawke's presidential and consensus-based leadership style'[919]. Keating, on the other hand, attempted to use parliament to maximise his power, rejecting Hawke's extra-parliamentary and somewhat populist approach to leadership which transcended the institution.

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[918] See, for example, John Edwards 1996, op cit, pp 515-16.
[919] Stephen Bradbury 2003, op cit, p 389.

The argument of this chapter has been that Paul Keating was an excellent parliamentary performer, but one who suffered from bouts of indiscipline. If Keating's parliamentary performance is analysed purely in the context of activity in the House of Representatives, we can see a positive effect. His ability to rouse the Labor backbench with spirited invective and, at times, differentiating 'us' and 'them' rhetoric, coupled with his demoralisation of successive Opposition Leaders was a valuable weapon in his leadership. The down side was that he was unable to tone down his aggression and the nastier side of his parliamentary persona, with negative consequences for his popularity in the electorate.

7

Painting the Big Picture

> [H]is language blessedly free of the social sciences, and being also free of the law, it was almost completely unrestrained. In its natural environment it served as the raw instrument of his intelligence, a shillelagh or a paint brush as circumstances demanded. With it he could sell an idea better than anybody else in the government. He painted word pictures, created images and moods at a stroke. He could turn ideas into icons, make phrases that stuck.[920]

The term 'conviction politics' describes individualised leadership and a forcefully presented and argued agenda. This, according to Patricia Lee Sykes, means that conviction politicians are often at odds with their party, or dominate it completely. This is similarly true of the other institutions of executive government; a conviction leader can, according to Sykes, circumvent the collective restraints placed on them by using the media to promote their agenda publicly[921]. For prime ministers, conviction politics is about developing an agenda and then forcefully selling that vision. How the vision is sold, through the media, by delivering speeches, and by acting on the international stage, goes a long way to determining the relative power of prime ministers and their ability to implement their agenda.

Paul Keating was an archetypical conviction politician. His public persona and speech, his media style and his salesmanship all reflected this approach to leadership. The 'big picture' Keating painted for the Australian public included important and courageous reforms such as Mabo, Asian integration, and steps toward the establishment of an Australian republic. The pursuit of these policies required Keating to convince, cajole and spruik in public forums including the media and on the international stage, and maximise speech making opportunities. Efforts of this magnitude called for steadfast conviction, and a belief that each reform was fundamentally right for the country. In this context Michael Gordon remarked that Keating was 'a brilliant

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[920] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 24.

political salesman, but his brilliance is underpinned by the conviction that the line he is selling is right'[922]. David Adams argues that 'perhaps he sold things so well because he believed what he was saying'[923]. When it came to articulating the big picture, the Prime Minister 'was sincere, he was passionate, he connected with his audience on an emotional level'[924].

Prime Minister Keating maintained a passionate but largely combative relationship with the Australian media, particularly the print component of the parliamentary Press Gallery. His prepared speeches were historically noteworthy but delivered without fire; his off the cuff speeches were sometimes amusing, other times they were sarcastic or hilarious or moving or admirable or emotional, but generally memorable. He strode the international stage with a growing confidence that drew plaudits and increased his prestige at home and abroad. Indeed his speech making and international statesmanship were two aspects of Keating's prime ministership that attracted the most public praise. Unfortunately, and with significant consequences, the same cannot be said for the fraught relationship between the PM and the Australian media.

Paul Keating was a born political salesman who could, when roused, fight with a passionate commitment to a proposal for reform, and act as a convincing advocate. Alan Ramsey, hardly an admirer of the PM, was moved to write in 1994 that Keating's great strength was that he

> can make bad news seem good news, villains appear heroes. He can put a credible gloss on just about any conjunction of events you care to name. He can persuade almost any group of people, high or low, into accepting black is or could be white, or at least pale grey. He is the shrewdest, most effective political advocate you'll probably ever come across in the basest, most manipulative business of them all[925].

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[921] Patricia Lee Sykes 2000, op cit.

[922] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 193.

[923] David Adams 1997, op cit, p 12.

[924] Brett Evans 2001, op cit, p 9.

[925] Alan Ramsey, 'Keating's Mailed Fist in a Velvet Glove', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1994, p 23.

Another journalist wrote that there was 'no better practitioner of the performance art of politics than Mr Keating'[926]. His speech writer, Don Watson, has written that when the Prime Minister was 'on a roll with it he could remind you of what language can be and what it can do'[927]. Public salesmanship was thus an important component of the prime ministerial repertoire of Paul Keating.

What prime ministers do and say is subject to more scrutiny than the public utterances of any other political figure. In this way, according to Colin Seymour-Ure, public communication can be seen as a power resource. Prime ministers have at their disposal a heavily resourced 'media machine', and they have greater and more direct access to the media and are more newsworthy. These factors allow the PM to manage their personal image and use it as a tool of public power[928].

Recalling Foley's notion of leadership stretch[929]; a prime minister attracts significantly more attention and opportunities to speak to the electorate. They are called upon to articulate publicly their own views and the direction of the Government. According to Patrick Weller, prime ministers

> are very public people. Whatever they say is newsworthy and liable to detailed scrutiny. Whatever they do is publicly assessed for wisdom and consistency. Domestically and internationally they speak for their nation, their government and their party. They appear frequently on the media, explaining and defending their actions, attacking their opponents and appealing to the voters for support. They must be articulate and effective public performers[930].

Keating's Press Secretary, Greg Turnbull, concurs with this view of an emphasis on the PM. In an interview for this thesis, Turnbull argued that when 'a prime minister thinks aloud it sets off a chain reaction of talk and chatter and musing at all levels of the Australian community from the depths of talkback radio to the heights of bureaucratic, departmental consideration of

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[926] Mike Seccombe, 'Keating's Banquet Offers Plenty to Chew On', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1993, p 7.
[927] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 24.
[928] Colin Seymour-Ure 2003, op cit, p 34.
[929] Michael Foley 2000, op cit; see also Chapter Two 'Prime Ministerial Leadership'.
[930] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 180.

policy initiatives'[931]. Michelle Grattan, in this vein, has also written that 'there is a great power to the role of Prime Minister that's beyond the power of sitting at the head of the Cabinet ... a power to articulate what a nation thinks about itself'[932].

Prime ministerial rhetoric is an under-analysed facet of Australian political leadership, but is an important concern of this examination of Paul Keating PM. John Uhr has also recognised the value of prime ministerial rhetorical analysis, designating it as the 'medium of public persuasion for democratic politics'[933]. It's function is to 'institutionalise political leadership; through their rhetoric, leaders cultivate and consolidate their followers'[934]. Public speech becomes an important aspect of personal leadership; it is exercised unfiltered by formal institutions and can be provided to the public straight from the leader's mouth or via the media[935].

This chapter examines in detail the public salesmanship of Paul Keating, Prime Minister. It deals first with the various aspects of his relationship with the media before analysing his speech making and international role. The argument is that the positive effect of his captivating speeches and international statesmanship were more than nullified by his poisonous and rapidly deteriorating relationship with the fourth estate. This important relationship was not effectively utilised by Keating as PM, despite the importance he attached to it as Treasurer and before. The Prime Minister treated journalists with contempt, questioning what they regarded as newsworthy, and then refused to forgive them for writing off his chances in the 1993 election. A relationship that was characterised by prime ministerial punishment and reward, and by an 'us and them' mentality, became increasingly sour over time. Prime Ministerial neglect of this important institution was a costly, counter-productive and petulant act that had a

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[931] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[932] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating's Year at the Top', *Age*, 18 December 1992, p 9.
[933] John Uhr, 'Rhetoric as an Institution of Leadership', in Geoff Brennan and Francis Castles (eds), *Australia Reshaped: Essays on 200 Years of Institutional Transformation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[934] Ibid.
[935] Ibid.

detrimental effect on public perceptions of Paul Keating and his electoral prospects in 1996.

The High Grade Drip

Prime ministers and their press secretaries deal with all forms of media in every corner of the nation, but their principal contact is with journalists working in the Parliamentary Press Gallery. In Australia, the Gallery is uniquely situated within the Parliament building itself, giving journalists the opportunity to work in the same confines occupied by key decision makers and leaders[936]. The Gallery is physically located on the top floor of the Senate side of Parliament House, and is essentially a long hallway of offices occupied by media organisations of print, radio, and television orientations. The result of 'sharing the same kennel', according to senior journalist Michelle Grattan, is a 'high level of access and interaction between groups'[937], including journalists, elected representatives, and staffers.

The plethora of literature that has been written about the Australian Parliamentary Press Gallery places much more emphasis on the personalities and activities of the Gallery rather than on its location and formal output. Clem Lloyd, for example, provides us with a valuable historical perspective[938], while Margaret Simons' colourful account[939] and contributions by Mike Steketee[940], Derek Parker[941] and Michelle Grattan[942] offer interesting descriptions of the contemporary Gallery at work. From these sources we know that the Gallery is much more than a physical place where journalists

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[936] See Mike Steketee, 'The Press Gallery at Work' in Julian Disney and JR Nethercote (eds), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital*, (Sydney, Federation Press, 1996).

[937] Michelle Grattan, 'Sharing the Same Kennel: The Press in Parliament House' in Julian Disney and JR Nethercote (eds), *The House on Capital Hill: Parliament, Politics and Power in the National Capital*, (Sydney, Federation Press, 1996), p 217.

[938] Clem Lloyd, *Parliament and the Press: The Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery 1901-88*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1988).

[939] Margaret Simons, *Fit to Print: Inside the Canberra Press Gallery*, (Sydney, UNSW Press, 1999).

[940] Mike Steketee 1996, op cit.

[941] Derek Parker, *The courtesans: the press gallery in the Hawke era*, (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1991).

[942] Michelle Grattan 1996, op cit.

pump out political news. It is a complex society of political reporters and commentators which adheres to long-held traditions, norms, hierarchies and structures that are not easily understood by outsiders. There are the acknowledged Gallery leaders – for example Laurie Oakes or Michelle Grattan – and many making their way up the journalistic ladder. Often there is a common Gallery line, where journalists follow the lead of the major players. That may be one reason why political operatives refer to the Gallery as one entity, rather than as disparate and individual outlets. A leader's relationship with this institution is a valuable determinant of political success.

The Press Gallery, and indeed the broader media, regard prime ministers as the primary source of political news. Michael Foley's conclusions about leadership stretch, in the British context, apply equally to the Australian experience when it comes to an analysis of this relationship between the PM and the media. To recap, Foley wrote that what 'were once media opportunities to reach a wider audience have now been turned into overriding media obligations to publicise political positions through the effective projection of party leaders as national figures'[943]. That some bemoan the individualisation of British political leadership, Foley argues, 'is a reflection of the unprecedented public projection and general salience of contemporary party leaders and, in particular, the prime minister'[944].

An Australian prime minister is similarly afforded much greater opportunities for media exposure then even their senior colleagues, and thus enjoys the same preconditions for leadership stretch[945]. A useful component of Foley's British analysis is his breakdown of media attention paid to the prime minister in relation to senior colleagues[946]. In conducting this analysis he uncovers a substantial gap between the coverage afforded the leader and that provided

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[943] Michael Foley 2000, op cit, p 205.
[944] Ibid, p 236.
[945] One influential journalist, Mike Steketee, argued the increasing prevalence of television, in particular, has further contributed to this trend towards individualisation. He told this author that 'TV in particular has increased the focus on the prime minister, as the focal point of the government ... it's really just the prime minister or the opposition leader that get a look in ... Other ministers go through the motions but all the focus is really on the leaders'; interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[946] Michael Foley 2000, op cit.

to other cabinet ministers. A more limited, but nonetheless illuminating, investigation uncovers a similar phenomenon in Australia. Leadership stretch in Australia can be illustrated, for example, by examining the media coverage of key Labor figures during the lead-up to the 1996 poll. A search of the archives of Australia's major national newspaper – *The Australian* – reveals a strong emphasis on the leader in comparison to senior colleagues. Prime Minister Keating featured in 311 articles during the five week campaign, while Deputy Prime Minister Beazley featured in just 43. Senior ministers such as Simon Crean (16 articles) and Gareth Evans (24 articles) were similarly shunned in favour of the Labor leader. Leadership stretch can also be illustrated drawing on data from the electronic media. A database of current affairs programs on both television and radio maintained by the Australian Parliamentary Library counts 105 segments in which Paul Keating was mentioned, compared with coverage of Beazley (38), Crean (43) and Evans (25). Therefore, of the electronic and print coverage of Labor's four most senior contributors to the 1996 election campaign, the Prime Minister garnered 68.8 percent compared with Beazley's 13.4 percent, Crean's 9.8 percent and Evans' 8.1 percent.

Though care should be taken drawing conclusions from this fairly limited data, it is clear that the phenomenon described by Foley and labelled leadership stretch, illustrated by media analysis undertaken in Britain, is replicated in the Australian context. But how much of leadership stretch can be contributed to a consciously planned strategy, on behalf of parties and leaders, to presidentialise the presentation of party leaders and to keep other senior colleagues in the background? On the other side of the coin, can leadership stretch in the media be attributed to pressures from the fourth estate, and to a market and political environment increasingly driven by personality? Because of this uncertainty regarding cause and effect, it is important that leadership stretch in the public domain be taken to mean two things: first, that parties pursue the 'great man' theory of leadership by promoting leaders as a visible captain of a team of ministerial foot soldiers; and second, that the media is similarly interested in presenting a 'one-man band' to the public.

Thus, both trends are mutually reinforcing, and provide one element of the leadership stretch that Foley aptly describes.

With the increasing media attention afforded prime ministers comes an enhanced responsibility to cultivate an effective working relationship with the media. Though the extent to which media affects election outcomes and popular perceptions is contested, there are, nonetheless, political costs associated with a poor prime ministerial relationship with opinion makers. Media effect is now largely gauged through the prism of the rise of television as a conduit for political news[947], but influential print and radio journalists have their own impact on the media climate. The effects, according to the literature, may be cognitive (affecting political knowledge), attitudinal (impacting on political opinions), or behavioural (affecting people's votes)[948]. Leaders must portray themselves favourably over all media, whether it be television, radio or print, to maximise these aspects of political decision making and opinion forming. As will now be demonstrated, Prime Minister Keating largely turned his back on this task of leadership at some cost.

Are You With Me or Against Me?

Prime Minister Keating maintained an uneasy, love-hate relationship with the media throughout his tenure. One senior journalist, Glenn Milne, remembers a relationship that 'varied between [journalists] being hypnotised by Keating and in a state of open warfare with him'[949]. This media relationship is central to any understanding of this Prime Ministership because of how it evolved and the costs associated with its decline. What makes it fascinating, too, is the passionate intensity of the relationship – flowing both ways between journalists and the PM – and the feelings of betrayal and disappointment that we can associate with the deterioration of what was once an extremely close alliance. This is excellently described by Mike Seccombe, who wrote that

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[947] Holli A Semetko, 'The Media' in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G Niemi, and Pippa Norris (eds), *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, (London, Sage Publications, 1996), pp 271-2.
[948] Ibid, p 272.
[949] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.

> No politician has had a more passionate relationship with the Canberra press gallery than Keating . He has made more appearances at the press club - 18 - than any other person. His press conferences in Parliament House during his tenure as Treasurer were the longest and most detailed anyone ever held. No-one has been more vocal in his approbation of the gallery when he thought we got it right, or in his vitriol when he thought we got it wrong. No-one was so prepared to argue his case in the corridors and offices or on the phone whenever he thought he had an important point to make. It was a love-hate symbiosis. At the bottom of it was an apparently genuine belief on Keating's part that he had to carry the argument with the people whose job it was to be informed, and know the detail of what government was about[950].

That the relationship was passionate, emotional and cerebral, rather than detached and professional, made its deterioration even more significant and less rational.

We learn much from Prime Minister Keating's own public and private utterances on the media. Publicly, in a speech at the 1992 Walkley Awards, he told the assembled journalists:

> I don't share this Nixonian – you won't have me to kick around any more – attitude. I like engagement. The Garboesque has no attraction for me. I don't want to be alone. I ask myself these days, does this make me peculiar? That I like to talk to the press? That, wrong-headed or inconvenient as they sometimes are, I like journalists? That I like politics? Am I wrong to believe that, for all the inevitable imperfections, this is one of the world's better democracies, and Australian journalists are a powerful reason why this is so? … I see the press down the back of the plane on overseas trips – fierce and hungry, like grizzly bears on a package tour of the Orient. There are members of my staff who are too frightened to walk down the aisle between them to go to the toilet. They wait till nightfall and tiptoe down when they're asleep – little knowing that journalists are at their most dangerous after dark … Yet I can't resist going down for a yarn[951].

However, this professed willingness to engage with journalists probably more closely applies to Keating's pre-Prime Ministerial political life, rather than the reality of his unfolding leadership.

At other times the more private utterances of the Prime Minister give us an alternative view of Keating's perceptions of journalists, perceptions that became increasingly contemptuous over time. In 1992 he refused to do 'bird

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[950] Mike Seccombe, 'PM's Genuine Passion Diluted by Plea for Help', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March 1993, p 9.
[951] Paul Keating, 'Political Life', speech to the 1992 Walkley Awards in Melbourne, 27 November, quoted in Mark Ryan 1995, op cit, p 13.

calls' for journalists over the Christmas break because while 'journos are looking for a story a week', 'they can't have one'[952]. Another account has Keating once remarking that 'while politicians made history, journalists contributed greatly to fish-and-chips wrapping'[953]. Margo Kingston wrote in 1992 that Keating seemed to be claiming that 'he had programmed journalists to do his bidding so well that they had gone too far and done him harm' over the issue of tariff reform[954]. Two other journalists interviewed for this thesis remember over-hearing the Prime Minister, in a conversation with his staff, refer to the assembled journalists as 'our little monkeys'[955].

Because of the contradictory nature of Paul Keating's own public and private comments on the media, it is more useful for us to look elsewhere for effective prisms through which to view the relationship between the PM and the media. There are three ways to explain this fraught association; as one where you were either for Keating or against him; as a relationship of punishment and reward; and as one where the priorities and assessments of the journalists and their subject varied greatly. Crudely put, if you knew where the 'weight' was you would be placed on the 'high grade drip', if you did not you were subject to a Prime Ministerial freeze and, potentially, even ridicule and abuse.

The high grade drip was a Keating expression that referred to his preference for selected journalists who were 'on side'. It was 'a typical Keating phrase to describe the mix of information, opinion, gossip and outright distortion which flows via non-attributable briefings from himself, his staff and selected public servants'[956]. Further, journalists who didn't 'like what's on offer from the Prime Ministerial "drip" run the risk of getting a very different sort of

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[952] Paul Keating on the *Sunday* program, quoted in Alan Ramsey, 'It's Too Soon For Hewson to Scoff', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 1992, p 21.
[953] Lindsay Murdoch, 'Letter from Asia', *Age*, 25 April 1992, p 12.
[954] Margo Kingston, 'Doubts for the True Believers', *Age*, 31 March 1992, p 6.
[955] Private conversations with two senior journalists.
[956] Brian Toohey, 'No Happy Medium For Keating', *Sun Herald*, 19 February 1995, p 36. It should be noted that the drip referred not to the leaking of documents or policy initiatives, which was not a significant part of the Keating media relationship according to Mike Steketee and Greg Turnbull.

treatment'[957]. His relationship with the media, in this way, can be seen as one characterised by reward and punishment; carrots and sticks[958]. He would 'bestow favours and threaten retribution'[959], such as the time he called in a senior correspondent, offered him access to the high grade drip and then threatened to cut him off at the knees if he caused any trouble![960] The Prime Minister was frank about his willingness to trade favours with journalists, and he kept a file of 'stories, particularly those which attracted his ire, and he would use them to make clear his displeasure and point out later inconsistencies or contradictions'[961].

A similar approach taken by Keating to his relationship with the media was one where journalists were either for or against him and his Government. One journalist even kept on her desk in the Canberra Press Gallery a photo of Keating, on which he had written 'are you for me or against me' above his signature[962]. In more detail

> Keating often behaves like a fascist when it comes to the media. It isn't so much that he's sensitive, which he is - very sensitive - but that he finds it almost impossible to accept that journalists who don't view any given issue or incident in exactly the same way he does aren't either fools or lazy or personally motivated. Or all three. He can be extremely intolerant of differing opinion. That is why it's easy to understand why those close to him don't very often tell him to his face that which he doesn't like to hear or won't accept. And they don't, I'm sure. You're either in the Keating cart or you're out of it, and if you're in it, you keep your mouth shut and your opinions and your advice to yourself, unless asked[963].

Mike Steketee also remarked that 'typical Keating is that you're either for him or against him, there's no middle course[964].

An important related factor in the Prime Minister's determination of whether a journalist was for or against him was an assessment of where the 'weight' – that is, what was important in public life – was. Keating increasingly thought the media was preoccupied with the minor issues such as furnishings for the

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[957] Brian Toohey, 'Telling Tales on Bully-Boy Keating', *Sun Herald*, 7 November 1993, p 34.
[958] See Peter Walsh 1995, op cit, p 286.
[959] Mike Steketee 1996, op cit, p 198.
[960] Private conversation with senior journalist.
[961] Mike Steketee 1996, op cit, p 198.
[962] Private conversation with senior journalist.
[963] Alan Ramsey, 'Big Pictures Have Sharp Corners', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1993, p 29.

Lodge and his own interests in a piggery in rural New South Wales, which prevented them from attaching importance to the big ticket items such as Mabo, the republic and Asian integration. This led Geoff Kitney to write, mid-1995, that 'Keating is feeling intensely frustrated about politics and the media. He believes he has just put in some of the best work of his prime ministership - the Budget, the republic, the Accord. But he's getting little return for it. Major decisions and political initiatives by the Government are making minor impact'[965]. Also illustrative of this view is the comment, delivered with typical Keating flourish, that if 'Abraham Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address in 1992, the chances are the journalists wouldn't report the speech but the so-called "doorstop" interview that followed it. And the first question they'd ask is: "How come you're talking about democracy and freedom when there's a war on?"'[966].

These approaches to understanding Keating's perceptions of the media are valuable ways to understand how and why the relationship deteriorated from the time of the leadership challenge until March 1996. The relationship, passionate and emotional, became contemptuous as the Prime Minister's publicly stated enjoyment of engagement gave way to his privately uttered low opinion of journalists and their assessments of the important issues in public life. Increasingly, in Keating's estimation, more journalists were 'against' him, fewer were 'for' him or knew where the weight was as time wore on.

While it would be simplistic to describe the Press Gallery's view of the Prime Minister as shared by all journalists, there nonetheless appears to be some agreement that Paul Keating was highly regarded because he always seemed to be newsworthy. Part of this sprung from his occupation of the highest elected office, but a significant part of journalistic interest arose from the Prime Minister's compelling rhetoric and pursuit of reform. Quick to point out his shortcomings, journalists interviewed for this thesis were nonetheless

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[964] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[965] Geoff Kitney, 'No Calm Before This Storm', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 June 1995, p 15.
[966] Paul Keating quoted in Michael Millett, 'No Point Panicking – The PM is Back', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July 1992, p 6.

eager to describe Keating's instinctive newsworthiness. Glenn Milne, for example, recounted how

> you never got sick of writing about Keating, things just happened. You never knew where you'd end up (laughs). He was a good story, always a good story. In Australian political terms he was an epic figure, and he did it with an enormous amount of flair. Even in decline he was a dark and brooding character worthy of writing about. A great story beautifully told[967].

Pamela Williams adds 'journalists are always drawn to a larger than life character – the man who needs little embellishment to make him a figure of fascination'[968]. Mike Steketee argues the Gallery admired Keating 'because he was an activist, he was reforming things, giving journalists plenty to write about' and his ability to sell things, dramatise them'[969]. In short, they 'admired him because he made news'[970]. Though Keating's decreasing estimation of the Australian media in turn coloured the media's view of the PM, the relationship was nonetheless affected by the Gallery's admiration of his ability to create stories. This meant that, though the relationship soured, the onus was on journalists to keep covering the Prime Minister, often positively, when circumstances demanded it.

Relations with individual journalists and media outlets varied markedly. Though Greg Turnbull, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, remembers Keating having an up and down relationship with all journalists and 'scar tissue from them all'[971], some enjoyed greater access and friendlier relations. Laurie Oakes was one who had amicable dealings with the PM, at least until Keating turned on Kerry Packer and the Nine Network for which Oakes worked. Paul Kelly, whose eldest son was the Prime Minister's godson, was seen to be close to Keating, despite the latter declaring at a going away party for Geoff Walsh that Kelly, as a political commentator, 'couldn't pick his nose'[972]. Michelle Grattan had an amicable relationship with the PM, as did Michael Gordon and economics writers such as Laura Tingle. John Laws was

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[967] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.
[968] Pamela Williams 1997, 'Behind the Victory', op cit, p 100.
[969] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[970] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[971] Ibid.
[972] Alan Ramsey, 'PM Boils Over As Labor Feels The Heat', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 February 1995, p 29.

a Prime Ministerial favourite[973], ABC radio and television was favoured, as was Sydney's *Telegraph-Mirror* after it editorialised in Labor's favour in 1993[974]. Mike Steketee's relationship was more variable, depending on the tone of Steketee's latest piece. Senior journalists were also given derogatory nicknames by Prime Minister Keating, demonstrating his growing contempt for their craft. Oakes became a 'cane toad', Glenn Milne was 'poison dwarf', and the bearded Mike Steketee became 'creeping Jesus'[975]. These three should count themselves lucky; Geoff Kitney's nickname was less creative, more insulting, and unprintable here[976].

Prime Minister Keating reserved particular contempt for a handful of journalists, outlets and proprietors; in particular Kerry Packer and the Nine Network; the *Sydney Morning Herald*; the *Western Australian*; the *Melbourne Sun*; and individuals such as Seven's Glenn Milne; *2UE*'s Alan Jones; and, more explosively, the *Sun*'s Nikki Savva[977]. In Milne's case, the Prime Minister went to some trouble to try and have him fired from the Seven Network[978]. The *Sydney Morning Herald* drew Prime Ministerial ire throughout the life of the Government, and even for some time after. In a speech in 2000 Keating called the 'Glebe Point Gulag at the *Sydney Morning Herald* – Marian Wilkinson, Kate McClymont, Toohey and so on – the group of former lefties who had believed for 15 years with the monomaniacal certainty of the Manson family, that I, along with most members of the New South Wales ALP, was corrupt'[979]. Nikki Savva drew explosive tirades, and was referred to by Keating as that 'Tory bitch'[980].

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[973] See below and Margo Kingston, 'How Keating Runs The Pack', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1995, p 6.

[974] Margo Kingston, 'How Keating Runs The Pack', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1995, p 6.

[975] Mike Seccombe, 'It Looks Like We're Forgiven', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March 1992, p 6; confirmed in interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.

[976] Private conversation with senior journalist.

[977] Margo Kingston, 'How Keating Runs The Pack', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1995, p 6.

[978] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.

[979] Paul Keating, 'The Australian media', *Sydney Papers*, vol 12, no 3, Winter 2000, p 73; see also Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 185.

[980] Savva was married to a Liberal and went on to work for Liberal Treasurer Peter Costello; see David Adams 1997, op cit, p 15 and Mike Seccombe, 'Kookaburra', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 1995, p 36.

Journalists close to Keating, by his standards, and those regarded as enemies, could all be subject to a personal phone call from the Prime Minister when their jottings met with his displeasure[981].   Geoff Walsh, an experienced media operative and former Keating adviser, commented that 'Paul had been around longer than most of them, and he wasn't shy of expressing his view directly to them when they differed'[982].   According to Steketee, 'Keating's telephone calls to proprietors, editors and Gallery journalists, normally when feeling aggrieved about the treatment of an issue, became legendary'[983].   The wife of one senior journalist, when answering the home telephone and finding the Prime Minister on the other end calling from a mobile or car phone, would ask him who was speaking so that Keating, now identified, would tone down his abuse in case the conversation was scanned and taped![984] Greg Turnbull, a witness to a number of such calls, recounts that they would 'start with a symphonic crescendo but always end with a conciliatory melody'[985].   Some journalists saw value in these lectures, and endured the abuse in order to get to the inevitable discussion that followed.   Kitney told this author that 'you'd put up with the abuse so you could have a talk to him afterwards'[986], and Milne remembers 'extremely valuable' phone calls where 'when he finished venting his spleen on you, you would inevitably end up having a valuable discussion, he would explain to you his thinking'.   Afterwards Milne would come 'away from those conversations battered but enriched[987]. Steketee, in a similar vein, spoke of how the Prime Minister would 'get something off his chest but then he go back to selling a story. He had an extraordinary ability to flatter, disarm, and intimidate at the same time. All in the space of a couple of minutes'[988].   Others were not so accommodating when it came to Prime Ministerial phone calls. Brian Toohey, firmly in the anti-Keating camp, wrote in 1993 that, for 'someone who does not put in long hours at the office, he spends a remarkable amount of time on the phone berating people who've

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[981] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 183.
[982] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[983] Mike Steketee 1998, op cit, p 198.
[984] Private conversation with senior Canberra Press Gallery journalist.
[985] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[986] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[987] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.
[988] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.

upset him'[989]. On a superficial level these spiteful and eventually public denunciations did little for his relationship with the media but, more importantly, it was the grudges that the Prime Minister accumulated that became more numerous and counter-productive for a leader who struggled to regain approval in the lead-up to the 1996 election.

The above discussion of Keating's relations with the fourth estate represent the worst of the association, but there could, at times, be high points in the relationship. Margo Kingston remembers the Prime Minister sparring with the media at rare press conferences before 1993, admiring the combat and his ability to bat back the questions[990]. Mike Steketee believes the Prime Minister was at his best when 'he was selling things, selling budgets, selling economic news, the national accounts'[991]. Keating's relations with the media could also soften considerably on international trips[992]. The Prime Minister drew plaudits when he granted interviews or photo opportunities outside the mainstream of political journalism. Interviews with TV personality and comedian Andrew Denton, and with musician Sir Bob Geldoff, are examples of this. Another came when the Prime Minister posed in dark black sunglasses for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine[993]. Shaun Carney from Melbourne's *Age* remembers being 'amazed that he, simply by putting on a pair of bloody sunglasses ... the way they all fell over themselves saying how contemporary it made him, how groovy he was'[994]. The effect of these occasions was to soften the hard edges of the Keating image, and take him away from a combative approach with Canberra Press Gallery journalists. As Greg Turnbull explained in an interview, when 'people did get to see another side of him it was always a plus for us. For instance, dare I say it, *Bourke's Backyard* at the Lodge with Annita and the kids was terrific[995].

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[989] Brian Toohey, 'Telling Tales on Bully-Boy Keating', *Sun Herald*, 7 November 1993, p 34.
[990] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.
[991] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[992] See, for example, Michelle Grattan, 'Keating on a High, But Forget an Early Election', *Age*, 28 September 1992, p 13.
[993] *Rolling Stone* Magazine (cover photo), Issue 481, March 1993.
[994] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.
[995] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

Prime Minister Keating, nonetheless, preferred not to engage in media 'stunts' that he described as 'tricked up', or fake. The Placido Domingo speech, quoted at length in this thesis' first chapter, contained a swipe at his predecessor and expressed disdain for 'walking through shopping centres tripping over TV crews' cords'. He was reluctant to 'spend endless time with newspaper photographers doing whatever ridiculous things they want him to do, some sort of pose to do the story'[996]. His preference was, in the main, for unfiltered salesmanship conducted over the radio airwaves.

Paul Keating's partiality for radio, in particular John Laws' nationally syndicated program reaching 2 million listeners, and the ABC's *AM* and *PM* programs, was illustrative of his rapidly souring relationship with the print media and television. He turned to live radio because his message could go out unfiltered to the public, and would not be distorted or manipulated by what he saw as a hostile Press Gallery[997]. In this way Keating 'wanted the ear of the electorate and was prepared to go to considerable lengths to prevent his words being filtered or distorted by the "serious" political media, especially the newspapers', according to Pamela Williams[998]. He apparently thought that the print media filtered 'his thoughts, that between him saying something and its appearance in print it goes through an editing process which either inadequately communicates his message or distorts it'[999]. This is the essence of what the Prime Minister himself told John Laws in a radio exchange chronicled by Alan Ramsey:

> Keating: 'Thank you, John. I appreciate the opportunity (to be here). And the opportunity, can I say, particularly to talk directly to people, and not have it sort of filtered, cut, you know, shredded to opinion, you know, by the sort of sub-editors and the rest. The fact of the matter is, on your program, as you say, dial-in democracy ...' Laws: 'You like that, don't you?' Keating : 'I like that line, dial-in democracy. It's also dial-out conversation about the things that really matter. And I hope your listeners have found it as valuable as I have. Thanks, John'[1000].

The numbers back up this observation of Keating's increasing reliance on radio and selected television outlets. In the first half of 1995 the Prime

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[996] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[997] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[998] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, p 81.
[999] Geoff Kitney, 'PM Changes Tack on Howard', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 1995, p 11.

Minister gave 45 radio interviews and 10 to television, 29 media appearances were quick doorstop interviews, leaving only 12 occasions for other types of interviews, including those exclusively for the print media[1001]. When questioned about this trend by print journalists on an international trip Keating apparently told them 'he'd always bypass the press gallery if he had something to say unfiltered to someone like John Laws who could give him a live audience of two million listeners. He'd be a mug if he didn't'[1002].

A Deteriorating Relationship

The venomous relationship maintained by Prime Minister Keating and the Australian media is a surprising development, given the history of the association and the closeness between them while he was Treasurer and before. Greg Turnbull explained to this author that

> Paul was always obsessed with the media. He was a creature of the media. But there were two clear phases of his relationship with the media. He was in love with the media, then he was out of love with the media... His love affair with the media was basically the 1980s. When he was an evangelical reformer of the Australian economy and he wanted to take the media and the public with him. And that's well documented. As a journalist I've seen Paul Keating sit in an aircraft drawing graphs of our economy on the back of an airline sick bag. So, intent was he on communicating his views and his understanding – his lay understanding, his street-smart, Bankstown, fibro understanding of the economy[1003].

Mike Steketee also went to some length to stress the relationship was once extremely beneficial for both parties. He recalls:

> From the very start, when he came into parliament, he was quite assiduous at cultivating the media. He used to sort of almost go and sit at the feet of Alan Reid, people like that, Max Walsh. Almost in a similar way to how he did with Jack Lang. He wanted to soak up the history of the place. But he was also cultivating influence, of course. All the way up to the period where he became prime minister, really, his relationship with the press gallery was a very active, a very close one. When I was in the press gallery, which covered most of the period he was treasurer,

[1000] Alan Ramsey, 'The PM Who Doesn't Like To Be Told "No"', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1995, p 35.

[1001] Alan Ramsey, 'Keating Turns Camera-shy, Selectively', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 1995, p 35.

[1002] Alan Ramsey, 'All Aboard the Travelling Circus', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 1993, p 27.

[1003] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

you'd see him up in the gallery more than just about any other government member[1004].

More colourfully, Margo Kingston recalls 'days when a tough-as-nails News Limited reporter confessed she had a picture of Keating above her bed', when 'some journalists'' kitchens featured posters of PJK, autographed by the great man' and when 'senior female journalists jostled each other (politely) to dance with Keating at Gallery dinners'[1005]. The heights of the relationship prior to 1991 and the depths it reached after Keating became Prime Minister led the same commentator to describe two phases of the association; the first phase, she argues, was 'seductive', while it deteriorated to become 'contemptuous' by the time Keating was PM[1006]. Greg Turnbull's comments back this up: 'by the time he became Prime Minister he'd done all that and the weight and the responsibility of the job and the imperatives of the job and the drag on his own psyche meant there was less and less time in his life and his mind for what he came to despise as the trivia of the media and the knuckleheadedness of the media'[1007].

A number of factors account for this decline from media darling to a two-way relationship of antipathy. First, the turnover of journalists from the Treasury days meant that a number of those who had been carefully cultivated by Keating had moved on and were replaced by those never subjected to the charming and passionately media conscious figure[1008]. Mike Steketee felt that there was a perception among journalists that Keating, having been openly supported by the media in his stoushes with Hawke, felt he had little use for them now he was Prime Minister. In this context, apparently there 'was some talk around the lines of "he's got what he needs out of us and now he's ignoring us"'[1009]. Another factor was the Prime Minister's exhaustion, and reluctance to spend time assiduously cultivating and maintaining an

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[1004] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.

[1005] Margo Kingston, 'How Keating Runs The Pack', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 August 1995, p 6.

[1006] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.

[1007] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

[1008] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.

[1009] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.

effective relationship with the media[1010]. In this context, Keating appeared to be pacing himself, as observed by Geoff Kitney in the middle of 1994:

> Paul Keating, now nearing the end of a quarter century in politics, is trying to play the game like a veteran champion footballer. He is trying to preserve his energy and his enthusiasm - thinking and acting strategically instead of rushing to be in every contest. He says his interest in the game now is kicking the big goals, not having a part in every play. One consequence of this is a much more strategic approach to dealing with the media. Once the media junky, relentlessly working the corridors of the gallery and courting the correspondents, Keating now keeps his distance. He almost never makes himself available for extended press conferences and only rarely does print media interviews[1011].

The situation became such that when requests for interviews were presented to Greg Turnbull and then to Keating, the PM 'would dismiss them – not only over the boundary but often out of the stadium pretty quickly'[1012].

The most prominent factor contributing to the deterioration of Keating's relationship with the media, however, was the Prime Minister's petulant reaction to being written off by pundits during the 1993 election campaign. In essence, 'he held a grudge but more accurately he felt vindicated and that we were an irrelevance - he'd defied all our predictions and therefore our judgement or opinion or reporting wasn't to be taken seriously', recounts Glenn Milne[1013]. Milne's journalistic colleague, Shaun Carney, agrees, telling this author that 'when Keating won in 93 they were shocked and embarrassed, and Keating, rather than say "oh well, these things happen, you guys got it wrong, doesn't matter", he couldn't forgive. How dare they not believe in him the way he believed in himself? Therefore he wanted to make them pay, and he basically wrote the gallery off[1014]. This is further confirmed by insider Don Watson, who wrote in his *Recollections* that in 'the last week of the [1993] campaign' the media put a 'poison in Keating's soul' which 'never left'[1015]:

> They thundered so righteously; they wrote him off and tagged around for the last two weeks without listening or seeing. Keating saw this not only

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[1010] Interview with Michael Gordon, 19 September 2002.

[1011] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating and Bank Need to Rethink Their Relations', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1994, p 15.

[1012] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

[1013] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.

[1014] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.

[1015] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 350.

as professional failure, but as betrayal. If politicians had done as badly as the media, the media would be 'baying for their blood', he told a press conference soon after the election. ... Nothing in his nature, including a streak of sadism, it sometimes seemed, would allow him to forgive; even when it was clear that his contempt only made their spite and revenge more certain[1016].

Steketee adds Keating 'did resent the fact that a lot of journalists wrote him off after the 93 election. The vast majority of the Press Gallery either said he wouldn't win, or doubted he'd win... He came to believe his own propaganda about true believers and how he won despite everyone writing him off, due to his own extraordinary efforts'[1017]. Keating's attitude saw the media 'ostracised as grubs'[1018].

Paul Keating's treatment of the media after they had written him off during the 1993 election campaign was a counter-productive, churlish and ultimately costly act that failed to recognise the agenda-setting and commentating role of the media, and its ability to influence public opinion and, consequently, prime ministerial power. Respected columnist Paul Kelly, of the *Australian*, argued in an interview that Keating's behaviour was 'counter-productive. He won the election. He then acted as though he almost lost the election. It was a strange reaction after the election. I suppose it would seem to me to be a more logical reaction to be generous to people whose judgements you had disproved'[1019]. Geoff Kitney described it as a 'totally irrational' strategy[1020], and Beazley staffer John O'Callaghan described it as 'unwise' of the Prime Minister[1021]. Margo Kingston opined that if Keating 'was going to have any show in 96 he had to maintain good relations and be accessible, and he wasn't'[1022]. There appears, therefore, to be a consensus among commentators and a reluctant acceptance among partisans that the Prime Minister's grudge against the media post-March 1993 was a self indulgent and costly act.

[1016] Ibid, p 360.
[1017] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[1018] Alan Ramsey, 'Keating Leaves Questions Unasked', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1994, p 33.
[1019] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.
[1020] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[1021] Interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[1022] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.

The analysis of media relations has so far concentrated on those aspects of the association which Prime Minister Keating could himself control. An important point that must also be made is that Keating, as a 'story', was, after a long tenure on the Labor frontbench prior to his election to the leadership, approaching exhaustion. In short, journalists were becoming sick of the Prime Minister; tired of his style and of writing about his exploits. There's 'always a predilection for journalists to look for something new and different'[1023], but the Keating and Labor 'story had sort of exhausted itself'[1024]. The Prime Minister himself sometimes alluded to this in caucus meetings where, reportedly, he told assembled MPs and Senators that 'we're bringing out the big statements, we're doing things but the Press Gallery have seen us for 12, 13 years, they're lifting the high-jump bar, they want us to do triple somersaults with pike, solid policy statements are being marked down as just another policy plan that Keating's brought out'[1025]. Even the inept Alexander Downer was given favourable coverage in relation to the PM, according to Shaun Carney, because journalists were 'keen for Keating to cop it in the neck'[1026]. He had, at least by 1996, exhausted the 'patience and goodwill' of the media; Keating had 'probably shit-bagged too many of them with the roaring loud phone calls and complaints about them to their editors and it had stopped being amusing'[1027]. Journalists 'loved the down hill, one ski, no poles stuff but they'd decided probably that his time had come and gone', adds Press Secretary Turnbull[1028]. This was made explicit in a conversation between the Prime Minister and Alan Ramsey late in 1996, where the latter reportedly told the former that he was 'sick of' him and, indeed, the media was 'all sick of' him and wanted to see him go[1029]. A relationship that was once so productive, and held so much promise in the early days of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership, reached its lowest point in the lead-up to the poll that would ultimately see the PM dumped by the electorate.

[1023] Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
[1024] Interview with Shaun Carney 28 August 2002.
[1025] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[1026] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.
[1027] Ibid.
[1028] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[1029] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 701.

What, then, are the costs for a Prime Minister who neglects this enormously important relationship with the fourth estate? If they exist, they are difficult to quantify, though some scholarly literature has analysed media effect on public perceptions of leaders and the outcomes of elections[1030]. Some credible commentators, such as Paul Kelly and Mike Steketee[1031], play down the direct electoral effect of the media on the outcome of the 1996 election, one that was partially lost by Labor as a result of being in office so long. Geoff Walsh also downplays the role of the media in Keating's defeat[1032].

However, the media did have a role in perpetuating perceptions of the Prime Minister as arrogant and out of touch. In this respect 'media commentary would have reinforced people's opinions and had an effect'[1033]; it influences 'the way that prime ministers are viewed by the public'[1034]. It became a kind of media shibboleth to proclaim the Prime Minister was 'out of touch' with the electorate, but this largely described the association with the media. A poor media relationship was translated to wider constituencies. As Greg Turnbull told this author, 'when you stop communicating with the media they're inclined to say you're out of touch and when an Australian politician is declared out of touch it's really a death sentence'[1035]. Glenn Milne believes Keating's disengagement made him a 'more vulnerable target' for journalists to declare him arrogant or not interested in the public[1036]. The media, infuriated with a Prime Minister they helped create for his reluctance to continue playing the media game, reacted with vigour. One journalist was quoted as saying that, 'If you treat the press like dogs, in the end they act like dogs and bite the hand that feeds them'[1037]. What was once such a strength of Keating's repertoire can only be regarded, in the years this thesis is analysing, as a fundamental weakness and a missed opportunity. The Prime

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[1030] Holli A Semetko 1996, op cit, pp 271-2.
[1031] Interviews conducted 4 November 2002 and 20 August 2002 respectively.
[1032] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[1033] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[1034] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.
[1035] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[1036] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.
[1037] Margo Kingston, 'How Keating Runs The Pack', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 August 1995, p 6.

Minister's relationship with the Australian media thus constituted a key blemish on Keating's leadership scorecard, in contrast with his impressive speech making delivery.

The Rhetorical Prime Minister

Prime Ministers can choose to give speeches simply because it is expected of them, and many go through the motions to satisfy this requirement. Others use speech making opportunities to set the agenda, leave a historical mark, and define the direction and objectives of the government. Paul Keating fits snugly into this second category. Comparable only to Gough Whitlam and, perhaps, Robert Menzies, in the importance attached to speeches, Keating's efforts were significant events and, read even now, some constitute compelling historical pieces, others satirical material. The speeches of the Prime Minister thus offer a valuable insight into the leader and his Labor Government. They place a personal stamp on the politics of the period.

Paul Keating was a story-telling, rhetorical Prime Minister who painted pictures with words, tore down enemies with them, and placed great value on public expression. As Brett Evans recently opined, Keating 'has been around for a long time, he knows a lot of stories, and he knows how to tell them'[1038]. The Prime Minister's nemesis, Alan Ramsey, even found much value in Keating the orator. He wrote in 1995 that

> It is the larrikin language, the brutal language, that delights or horrifies. That's the language that makes the news. So do his creative word pictures. They can be as wounding as they can be illuminating and people admire or detest him for it. Less well understood is Keating 's ability, when the mood takes him, to deliver some of the clearest, most simple, yet impressive speeches to be heard in politics ... such speeches are, variously, very moving, very funny, very real, even thrilling at times. The common thread is the utterly right note they strike[1039].

[1038] Brett Evans 2001, op cit, p 8.
[1039] Alan Ramsey, 'Friend or Foe, PM Pays Out In Full', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1995, p 39.

Keating himself described his words as 'hammers', but 'not profane words. They're just words, arranged properly'[1040]. The Prime Minister used speeches to hammer opponents, and to hammer out a theme.

Speech writing for the Prime Minister and Keating's own role in their production was a creative process[1041]. The key players were speechwriter Don Watson, the relevant Department, key advisers in the PMO and, of course, the Prime Minister himself. Generally the process began with a preliminary draft or extensive notes from the Department with responsibility for the speech topic, followed by input from the staff of the appropriate minister and an adviser in the Prime Minister's Office, and then the crafting of a draft speech by Watson[1042]. The task here was to take the draft and do 'what speech writers are paid to do - which is to make a speech of it. A coherent, incisive, eloquent, informative, politically astute speech[1043]. Watson would then circulate a draft 'among other advisers for the purpose of checking facts, the policy direction and the political focus'[1044]. If the speech was an important one the Prime Minister would be shown a draft while others 'he would read in the car on the way to deliver them'[1045]. Landmark speeches such as that which set in train the substantial debate over an Australian republic[1046] were carefully workshopped and painstakingly constructed. Tony Wright provides a valuable insight into the process that led to this particular speech, which is indicative of the Keating approach:

> So possessed was Paul Keating with the idea that everything should be perfect, he made the final change to his speech on the republic just five minutes before he revealed the details to his Labor Caucus at 6 pm on Wednesday. He had spent much of the day at The Lodge, reading drafts of the speech, grabbing the telephone to discuss with his principal speechwriter, Don Watson, the removal of a word or the addition of a phrase, then re-reading, speaking it out loud, striving for rhythm and cadence. When it was done and Keating had been driven to Parliament House, the speech was still too long. It had to be precisely 30 minutes. It was more than a minute over. With the stroke of a pen, five paragraphs disappeared. It was tough. By then, the Keating team thought no word was superfluous. The speech had been four days in the writing; longer in

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[1040] Quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 45.
[1041] See Don Watson, Michelle Grattan, 'Keating Speaking', *Age*, 23 November 1995, p 13.
[1042] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 57.
[1043] Don Watson, Michelle Grattan, 'Keating Speaking', *Age*, 23 November 1995, p 13.
[1044] Ibid, p 58.
[1045] Ibid.
[1046] In Mark Ryan 1995, op cit, pp 173-86.

the making. A deputy secretary in Keating 's department, Greg Wood, had fed in the raw data, other staff had checked the detail, trying to make it bullet-proof, and Keating had spent hours with Watson, poring over the words[1047].

On other occasions time did not permit such a thorough process, such as when the Prime Minister addressed the National Press Club on the subject of *One Nation* armed only with a 'half-written speech and scraps of notes, many of them in answer to the morning press'[1048]. Some were given without notes at all – 'off the cuff' – after some practice and testing in the Office[1049]. Others from scribbled notes on the back of a drinks coaster at a function, where boxes and arrows and underlines are added by the PM to remind him where emphasis and forward momentum are required[1050]. Still other speeches were completely spontaneous and delivered without notes.

Whether the speech was to be made from notes or off the cuff was the key determinant in the type of speech the Prime Minister was able to deliver. The simple rule was that speeches written by Don Watson and read like a script were those created for the historical record but which were delivered dispassionately. Such speeches included the Redfern, Unknown Soldier, and republic speeches. The spontaneous speeches were largely partisan, satirical and passionately delivered. We find examples of the latter group in his 'fireworks' and 'true believers' speeches.

Keating's delivery of set-piece speeches was average at best. The Prime Minister was 'far less comfortable delivering a prepared speech and often seems to treat them as chores'[1051]. Shaun Carney wrote that, when Keating delivered a prepared speech, he 'hunches over the podium, dons his specs, and surmounts each word printed on the page in front of him in the tired retiree-style of the Barry Humphries character, Sandy Stone'[1052]. Similarly, in 1994 Tony Wright wrote that 'when the Prime Minister rose to speak to the faithful at the conference yesterday, those familiar with his style just knew this

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[1047] Tony Wright, 'The Story Behind That Speech', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1995, p 1.
[1048] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p19.
[1049] See Bruce Jones, 'Voice of a Listening Leader', *Sun Herald*, 11 September 1994, p 29.
[1050] See Brett Evans 2001, op cit, p 9.
[1051] Geoffrey Barker, 'A Juggler in Full Flight', *Age*, 4 June 1993, p 17.
[1052] Shaun Carney, 'Your Funeral, My Speech', *Age*, 3 February 1996, p 2.

was going to fall short of greatness. The eyes went down to the paper and the monotone began. Mr Keating, at the flight of free-form passion, is a riveting speaker, but he reads like an automaton'[1053]. His speech writer believes Keating's poor delivery of scripted speeches can be attributed to his ability to 'only perform from conviction', because, lacking 'conviction he lost credibility, and without credibility he was done for'[1054]. John O'Callaghan believes the Prime Minister continued delivering these speeches because 'he wanted to leave a structured legacy of his contribution'[1055]. This is a notion alluded to by Sam Lipski, who wrote that while 'Keating never seems quite comfortable with reading from a text and making the words his own', 'it is the content of the Keating/Watson speeches that ultimately matters' to historians, journalists and commentators alike[1056]. On those occasions he was essentially telling the nation a story about itself; Keating 'had the fashionable kind of detachment which saw the world as stories and story making: looking for constitutional change, a new flag, closer links with Asia and so on, he told Australians they held to tell themselves new stories'[1057].

Off the cuff speeches were the Prime Minister's forte. Though lacking the historical importance of the Redfern and Unknown Soldier speeches, for example, the spontaneous addresses by Keating are memorable for their passion and for their expert delivery. Margo Kingston offered the opinion that it was the 'spontaneity of the wit and the intensity of the language' that made him effective as an orator[1058]. He also could employ a larrikin humour to which the audience would react favourably. His delivery could be engaging also, when speaking off the cuff; Clarissa Bye observed that the Prime Minister had 'an uncanny ability to know when he's being looked at, during speeches he turns and returns the eye contact of those looking directly at him. Occasionally slipping his hand out of his pocket to point for emphasis, his self contained demeanour belied the intensity of the insults'[1059].

[1053] Tony Wright, 'Flat Delivery But PM Scores', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 1994, p 10.
[1054] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 144.
[1055] Interview with Jon O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.
[1056] Sam Lipski, 'Keating's Voice Fails to Strike the Right Note', *Age*, 29 May 1995, p 13.
[1057] Graham Little 1997, 'The Two Narcissisms: Comparing Hawke and Keating', op cit, p 20.
[1058] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.
[1059] Clarissa Bye, 'Keating Sets the Agenda', *Sun Herald*, 1 October 1995, p 31.

Simple, working class language was central to the effectiveness of the Prime Minister's off the cuff speeches, as was his ability to paint pictures with words and reduce complex concepts down into everyday parlance that could be understood. Michael Lavarch told this author in an interview that he 'loved Paul's turn of phrase. In a way he'd be right at home in a 1950s waterside hotel or something. He had a lovely sort of language, it was so evocative and marvellously descriptive. It had such pull and capture. Brilliantly able to paint pictures, both when he was tearing something apart in the parliament or building up and explaining something[1060]. John Button also had a high appreciation for the simplicity of Keating's language and ability to get to the essence of an argument[1061]. His language could also be typically blunt, which is why Graham Little refers to his 'user's knowledge of the richest language of the street'[1062].

The divergence between the speech making style of the scripted versus the off the cuff Paul Keating reflected separate objectives the Prime Minister was trying to achieve. Prepared speeches were delivered with an eye to the historical record while spontaneity was directed towards humour, partisanship, or emotion, and the present day. Lipski takes this analysis to an extreme, describing two Paul Keatings. The first is 'the Bankstown politician (K1), who speaks with his own voice in unmistakable Keatingese and comes on like 76 trombones' and the second, 'K2', 'also speaks to the nation and the world with his own voice. But the words, ideas and rhetoric are increasingly those articulated by speechwriter and historian Don Watson, whose style is more the string or jazz quartet[1063]. Both 'Keatings' are observable in the topics he chose and the speeches now recorded by history.

A brief analysis of some of the speeches delivered by Prime Minister Keating throws up some now-familiar themes. The scripted speeches largely dealt with subjects such as nationalism, reform, change, new ideas, and the history

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[1060] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.
[1061] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[1062] Graham Little 1997, 'The Two Narcissisms: Comparing Hawke and Keating', op cit, p 20.
[1063] Sam Lipski, 'Keating's Voice Fails to Strike the Right Note', *Age*, 29 May 1995, p 13.

and future of the Australia that the Prime Minister saw and tried to articulate. The PM offered listeners 'some intellectual muscle, a touch of self-justification, a bit of history, a bit of sentimentality, plus, of course, a dash of venom'[1064].

There are many noteworthy speeches from the Keating Prime Ministership through which a scholar can trawl for insights into the Labor Government and its leader. Many of these speeches are available at the web site *www.keating.org.au* and in Mark Ryan's collection; *Advancing Australia*[1065]. Here excerpts of a selection of the Prime Minister's speeches – notably the Redfern Speech, the Dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and An Australian Republic: The Way Forward are reproduced in order to provide a flavour of Paul Keating's oratory and the power and imagination behind his words.

The first stop in any tour of Prime Minister Keating's notable speeches is 10 December 1992 and the speech which launched the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, commonly referred to as the Redfern Speech. Keating called the Mabo decision an historic one which represented 'the basis of a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians' and comprised 'a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be – truly the land of the fair go and the better chance'[1066]. Rising to a crescendo, he implored the Australian people with these words:

> We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation. We cannot imagine that. We cannot imagine that we will fail. And with the spirit that is here today I am confident that we won't. I am confident that we will succeed in this decade[1067].

1064 Brett Evans 2001, op cit, p 10.
1065 Mark Ryan 1995, op cit.
1066 Ibid, p 227.
1067 Ibid, p 231.

This speech drew rave reviews from the media. An *Age* editorial praised the PM for acknowledging, 'more honestly and explicitly than any previous Australian leader had dared to do, white Australia's responsibility for the dispossession and misery of the descendants of this continent's first inhabitants'[1068].

A similarly positive response from the commentariat followed Prime Minister Keating's dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, at Canberra's War Memorial on 11 November 1993. The stirring speech began with the memorable words

> We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, or precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances: whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was[1069].

After reciting the numbers of Australians who have died in foreign conflicts the Prime Minister declared: 'He is all of them. And he is one of us'. The soldier might 'enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that, in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here, there is faith enough for all of us'[1070]. In this speech the high point of the Keating-Watson alliance appears to have been reached.

A number of the themes of Keating's Prime Ministerial oratory – nationalism, reform, change, Australian history – can also be detected in the 7 June 1995 delivery of a speech outlining the 'way forward' to an Australian republic[1071]. Typically, the PM spoke of seizing an opportunity when he declared that 'Governments can wait for opinion to force their hand, or they can lead. They can wait for the world to change and respond as necessity demands, or they can see the way the world is going and point the way'. It was up to the

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[1068] 'Atoning for a Black Past', *Age*, 12 December 1992, p 13.
[1069] Mark Ryan 1995, op cit, p 287.
[1070] Ibid, pp 287-8.
[1071] Ibid, pp 173-84.

Australian people to make the most of this opportunity; 'Our destiny is in no-one else's hands but our own: we alone bear the responsibility for deciding what the nature of our government and society will be, what advantage we will take of our human and material resources, what kind of place our children will inherit'. He declared proudly that 'The right Head of State for Australia is one of us, embodying the things for which we stand, reminding us of those things at home and representing them abroad. We number among those things fairness, tolerance and love of this country. It is a role only an Australian can fill'. Then, moving on to theme of independence from Britain: 'We are not a political or cultural appendage to another country's past. We are simply and unambiguously Australian'. With the confidence of a conviction politician certain of the robustness of the argument he finished simply with: 'We share a continent. We share a past, a present and a future. And our Head of State should be one of us'. So ended another foray into Australian history, culture and reform which marked all of Paul Keating's significant written speeches delivered for the record.

Of the off the cuff utterances or less prepared speeches many are notable, including the true believers victory speech in March 1993. One particularly humorous address was delivered to a Labor Party dinner in Brisbane on May 16 1994[1072]. This was the fireworks speech, where Keating belittled the major players on the Liberal Party frontbench. He called John Hewson a skyrocket; 'first a shower of sparks, and then a dead stick falls to earth'. John Howard was a 'Flower Pot', which 'always promised a dazzling performance' but then 'there was a bit of a show, and then there'd be a bit more, and a bit more, then, finally, it fell away to nothing'. Warming to the theme, he then described Bronwyn Bishop as a 'Catherine Wheel' which people used to 'nail to the fence and they'd take off, spreadeagle the kids, burn the dog, run up a tree and then fizzle out going round in circles'. Listening to the audio tape of the night some weeks later, an ALP official remarked to this author how, when the Prime Minister was speaking, you could slowly hear the noise of the cutlery at the dinner quieten down until there was a dead silence punctuated

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[1072] Mark Ryan 1985, op cit, pp 28-9.

only by uproarious laughter[1073]. The assembled Labor faithful, veterans of boring speech nights and fundraisers, had locked in to hear their Prime Minister fire rockets at the hated Liberals. As the audio record[1074] of the night demonstrates, you could hear a pin drop.

Like many aspects of Paul Keating's Prime Ministerial tenure, there were up and down sides to his speech making; light and the inevitable and familiar shade. The prepared speeches were rarely criticised for their tone or seriousness, though of course the subject matter led to significant debate. Off the cuff speeches were more subject to criticism. The true believers speech of March 1993 drew a considerably adverse reaction for its tone and exclusivity, and the Prime Minister's blunt language in parliamentary addresses and during less guarded moments was also criticised from time to time. Graham Little, for example, considered Keating's language not 'reassuring for the people who are struggling to hold their jobs – for whom words are meant to have gravitas, should be used sparingly, be sincere and give clear direction'[1075]. Nonetheless, speech making was one aspect of the prime ministerial job description that Paul Keating performed admirably and effectively. This analysis of his oratorical style and subject matter has uncovered some coherent, serious themes pursued by Prime Minister Keating and placed on the public, historical record. Keating's big picture was outlined with words and then filled in with policies. As a rhetorical advocate for the things upon which the Prime Minister attached importance, he was a forceful and significant leader.

Striding the International Stage

Prime ministers take their task of persuasion to the international stage with great potential for domestic reward and similarly significant opportunities to fail. They represent Australian interests abroad on matters deemed too important for the foreign minister to alone negotiate. They deal personally with foreign leaders of all persuasions and from right around the globe. If the

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[1073] Conversation with Linus Power, 2002.
[1074] The audio record is a private taping maintained by the Queensland Branch of the ALP.

prime minister's brand of diplomacy is effective, or if significant international deals are struck or crises averted, she or he reaps domestic political rewards. If the process turns sour, however, the prime minister may face the wrath of the electorate for failing to achieve Australian objectives, for offending a foreign leader or damaging an international relationship. Regardless, how engaged in diplomacy a prime minister becomes is a decision she or he can make, with foreign and defence ministers always willing to fill the vacuum left by a leader focussed more on the domestic political scene.

International relations offer a valuable opportunity to maximise prime ministerial power, the focus of the brief analysis below. It should be noted at this point that a more complete analysis of Keating's international diplomacy must necessarily wait for subsequent studies, given space constraints and this thesis' concentration largely on domestic prime ministerial leadership. Therefore, rather than explore in detail the foreign policy of the Keating Government, or his relationships with other world leaders, or the demarcation of duties with his foreign minister Gareth Evans, instead the political and media impact of his forays into international affairs will be gauged[1076]. From earlier analysis and from Chapter Two's discussion of the leadership principle of 'going public', we know that prime ministers can benefit from a public stage from which to espouse their personal views. In this way, international relations provide an even broader forum for influence, and greater capacity for the exercise of prime ministerial conviction. In this way going *international* can be seen as another worthwhile strategy for leaders to maximise their prime ministerial power.

Keating strode the international stage with increasing confidence[1077], and had much success in this arena. He visited many places, including: Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Japan, Singapore, Cambodia, Republic of Korea, China, Nauru, United State of America, United Kingdom, Ireland,

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[1075] Graham Little 1997, 'Leading Change', op cit, p 15.

[1076] For summary analysis of Keating's foreign policy see James L Richardson, *The Foreign Policy of the Hawke-Keating Governments*, (Canberra, ANU, 1997); see also Paul Keating 2000, op cit.

[1077] Appendix Four demonstrates the increasing regularity with which Keating visited overseas countries to discuss trade and security issues.

France, Monaco, Cyprus, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, France, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, New Zealand, Israel and Malaysia[1078]. At times he could be brilliant – witness the Indonesian defence treaty and his role in the establishment and maintenance of APEC – at other times lacklustre, as was the case when he labeled Malaysian leader Mahathir 'recalcitrant'[1079]. Peter Smark described the Prime Minister abroad as 'like a Stealth bomber fitted with two missiles. One is filled with high explosive and the other with flower petals. You never know which button he'll press'[1080]. Criticism also came from those who had determined Keating cared only for the high politics of foreign affairs and was neglecting domestic concerns such as unemployment. Despite this, international activity strengthened Keating's position on the domestic scene, drew supportive commentary from the usually hostile media, built useful relationships with international leaders, and saw some significant policy objectives achieved.

Typically of the big picture-focussed Prime Minister Keating, his international exploits concentrated exclusively on large-scale policies such as the establishment of a leader's summit under the banner of APEC and the signing of a defence treaty with Indonesia's President Suharto. Keating himself wrote this in his book *Engagement;* he 'was determined to focus on those things that only a prime minister could do'[1081]. There was a risk associated with a heavy investment in objectives which were as brash and internationally significant as these. Geoffrey Barker wrote in the *Age* in 1993 that Keating was investing 'his prestige and reputation in clearing the path to a summit meeting of APEC leaders'[1082]. But gambles like these, in the international arena, often paid off for the PM. An example of a typical media response to a Keating success abroad can be found after he played an important role on the Bogor declaration on free trade, signed in November 1994. The event led one

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[1078] For a detailed list of international visits by Prime Minister Keating see Appendix Four.
[1079] See Eric Loo and Martin Hirst, 'Recalcitrant or keras kepala? A cross cultural study of how Malaysian and Australian press covered the Keating/Mahathir spat', *Media International Australia*, no 77, August 1995, pp 107-119; and Paul Keating 2000, op cit, pp 169-80.
[1080] Peter Smark, 'Time To Shake Off This Provincial Attitude', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 1995, p 13.
[1081] Paul Keating 2000, *Engagement*, op cit, p 10.
[1082] Geoffrey Barker, 'New Paul Keating Treads World Stage', *Age*, 24 June 1993, p 15; ; see also Paul Keating 2000, *Engagement*, op cit, pp 76-97.

journalist to write that the 'deal struck with scripted ceremony to remove barriers to regional free trade within the next 25 years is, by Mr Keating 's account, the most important feat of his political career. It is also probably the most significant achievement of post-War Australian diplomacy. ... For that, Paul Keating is entitled to take a bow'[1083]. That a fundamentally hostile press could applaud such achievements so lavishly is indicative of the power that international statesmanship can bring a diplomatically successful Prime Minister.

An important part of this success was Keating's ability to strike up close rapport with the leaders of other nations. His relationship with Suharto of Indonesia was particularly tight and, though criticised because of that country's human rights abuses, the personal alliance did much for Australian-Indonesia relations and was credited as such. One article described at length Keating's ability to develop close individual ties with foreign leaders:

> Does this sound familiar? 'He said in the end that it was one of the most pleasant and interesting encounters he'd had in many years',' said a source close the Prime Minister. 'It was clear from the beginning that he really warmed to the Prime Minister's knowledge of the country's history and culture . . . it was well beyond the normal thing'. Was this the meeting with Mitterrand in Paris last May? Or Do Moui in Hanoi last April. Or Suharto in Jakarta in November? No, it was Tuesday, so it must be Bonn and Chancellor Helmut Kohl. What is the special magic about Paul Keating that whenever he hits the diplomatic trail, foreign leaders seem to be bowled over by his charisma? No sooner do they shut the door for those ritualistic one-on-one talks, than our Prime Minister we are told has some of the world's most wily and wizened statesmen almost eating out of his hand'[1084].

This is by no means an isolated example of the commentary that followed Keating's international sojourns. He was an effective international networker who used personal conversations with European, Asian and American leaders to advance his own agenda and win praise from the Australian media.

Positive reactions to Keating's international efforts went part of the way to rectifying the poor light in which the Prime Minister was seen domestically, as illustrated by flagging opinion polls and generally poor media coverage. An Asian visit in September 1992, for example, was said to give Keating some

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[1083] Mark Baker, 'For Keating, Grinners Are Winners', *Age*, 16 November 1994, p 1.

political momentum and a 'morale boost'[1085]. The trip was seen as 'a stroke of extreme good fortune' which was 'likely to assist the Keating resuscitation' because 'it gives him an opportunity to play statesman' and the 'nature of the trip falls into happy alignment with Keating's domestic political agenda'[1086]. Similarly, after ten days in Europe in June 1994, and confronted with criticism from the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister was able to tell Ray Martin on Channel Nine that 'well, that's what they all say, Ray. I mean, as you know, on my European trip I met a lot of the leaders of Western Europe. I mean, nobody there had 5 percent growth, 1 per cent inflation and 3.5 percent employment growth. When they hear those numbers, they say: 'Well, gee, if only we could have that.' That is the sort of problem I'm quite sure Alexander Downer would love to be wrestling with'[1087]. International statesmanship had again afforded the Prime Minister an opportunity to deflect domestic criticism and act on a larger stage.

Paul Keating's pre-Prime Ministerial interest in foreign affairs in general, and Asian integration specifically, was either non-existent or well-hidden from the public. That he was able to become a significant international player and key negotiator of agreements such as those relating to APEC was a triumph of his tenure. One balanced commentator, when interviewed for this thesis, called him, 'in terms of his overseas style', a 'great symbol of the Australian people'. Keating had the 'suggestion of a swagger', a 'confidence', and the 'willingness to try and lead'[1088]. Though Keating's diplomatic style and international achievements could be studied at length, it will suffice to say in this study that the Prime Minister came to recognise the potential of international statesmanship and tapped it when required in the interests of his big picture and for domestic political gain.

[1084] Mark Baker, 'An Operator Abroad', *Age*, 11 March 1995, p 19.
[1085] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating on a High, But Forget an Early Election', *Age*, 28 September 1992, p 13.
[1086] Peter Hartcher, 'Hewson Can't Beat the Feeling', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 1992, p 11.
[1087] Alan Ramsey, 'Gallic on the Breath as Sheep Follows Form', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 1994, p 39.
[1088] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.

Painting the Big Picture

Prime ministers are salespeople afforded significant opportunities to promote themselves and the actions of their government. The media is the most obvious and most powerful of these platforms, and is populated by journalists and proprietors that must be massaged and cultivated and kept on side if an effective relationship is to be maintained. Speeches afford another opportunity for prime ministerial salespersonship, and can be used, if so desired, to set the agenda, define the actions of friends and enemies, or place substantial issues on the historical record. Prime ministers must also act as salespeople on the international stage; persuading and cajoling foreign leaders with their own constituencies to appease and impress and using the benefits of 'going international' to maximise their domestic political stocks. The media relationship remains the most important of all of these prime ministerial platforms, however, because it has the power to influence how all acts of advocacy are viewed by the public and determines in large part the ultimate success or failure of the PM to lead public debates over the nation's future. Prime ministers are newsworthy and must be reported, but *how* they are reported is the prerogative of the media.

Prime Minister Keating was a conviction politician with a well-developed agenda, who used rhetoric and international diplomacy to painstakingly paint his big picture. His prepared speeches carried great weight, and set the nation on a course of reform that included international integration, particularly with the country's Asian neighbours, Australian republicanism and much else. His forays into international relationships brought gains in the form of APEC and the defence treaty with Indonesia. Judged on these aspects of salesmanship alone, Keating's Prime Ministership was a roaring success. Unfortunately, these gains were largely nullified by the poor relationship the PM maintained with the mainstream political media in Australia. What was once a source of great strength for an advocate such as Keating became a significant and costly factor in his public fall from grace. His refusal to engage with the media, particularly after his decision to 'punish' journalists after they wrote him off after the 1993 election victory, was a self-defeating act that

coloured media perceptions of the Prime Minister and turned commentary against him. A big picture without a compliant media became too difficult to paint, and the public were denied a proper viewing of the gains which Paul Keating worked so assiduously to cultivate in the international arena and about which he spoke so eloquently.

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Pressing the Flesh

I don't want their love, I want their *votes*[1089].

The theory in the Labor Party was that Hawke always wanted to have an election because he knew it gave him a chance to front the electorate, while Keating never wanted to have an election because he knew it gave the electorate a chance to front *him*[1090].

In the end, the moment of truth comes out when they get to those stubby pencils and the ballot box[1091].

Public opinion is the lifeblood of Prime Ministers whose job depends on electoral success. Their peers also judge them on the *prospect* of electoral success[1092], as indicated by regular polls. Favourable public ratings are an important tool for leaders because they bestow on leaders more authority when dealing with alternate power bases[1093]. More importantly, like the parliamentary party, the electorate can determine whether or not a prime minister remains in the position. This means there are few more significant and pressing tasks for the leader than to court favourable public opinion and maintain a positive relationship with the people. Failure to do so can invite electoral defeat or an adverse judgement from the caucus.

Increasingly, prime ministers are held accountable for the standing of the government, making the pursuit of favourable public opinion an individual, and perhaps somewhat 'presidential', activity. Between elections, according to Patrick Weller, 'prime ministers have greater responsibility for "selling" governments than anyone else'. They are 'recognisable, the subject of continual assessment by opinion polls' and 'the spokesperson on television

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[1089] Paul Keating, quoted in Tony Stephens, 'In the Pokies Palace, Luck Goes the Way of the True Believers', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 1993, p 7 (emphasis added).
[1090] Peter FitzSimons 1998, op cit, p 366.
[1091] Paul Keating, 26 October 1995.
[1092] See Chapter Three 'Leading Labor'.
[1093] Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 197.

and other media'[1094].   At campaign time, electioneering 'appears to be the most presidential' of prime ministerial tasks, because

> The focus is on the leader, from the time that the calling of an election is contemplated until the results are known. Prime ministerial popularity is continually assessed, prime ministerial statements are examined, prime ministerial composure is analysed. Credit for victory or blame for defeat is given, in part at least, to the leader – after all, leaders are expected to win elections[1095].

If they can't win an election they can't continue as PM; if they can't appear likely to succeed there is a greater likelihood that their colleagues will look elsewhere for leadership.

Prime ministers are becoming more important to the decisions voters make in the privacy of the polling booth, gradually catching up with the party as a key determinant in voter choice.   In this context, Anthony Mughan's analysis of leaders' roles in contemporary election campaigns, introduced in Chapter Two, is worth revisiting. He uncovers a trend towards increasing 'leader effects' on election results, a phenomenon that has become more prominent since the 1960s and 1970s[1096].   Ian McAllister has also analysed this trend and concluded that as, 'partisanship in the electorate has weakened and the electronic media have become more dominant, leaders have become more important electoral cues to guide the choices of voters'[1097].   Further, in the 'absence of partisan and social ties anchoring them to specific parties, voters are more politically volatile and, as a result, more susceptible to the influence of a political leader with whom they can identify'[1098].   This has important ramifications for leadership and for the authority of Westminster prime ministers, who accumulate 'much of the accountability functions once exercised by the party'[1099].

Much, therefore, is expected from the prime minister in the public sphere. They must be effective campaigners and consistently popular between

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[1094] Patrick Weller 1989, op cit, p 175.
[1095] Ibid, pp 185-6.
[1096] Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit, p 49.
[1097] Ian McAllister *Prime Ministers, Opposition Leaders and Government Popularity in Australia*, paper delivered to the Australasian Political Studies Association conference, 23-26 September 2001, p 18.
[1098] Ibid, p 1.

election times. The costs for an unpopular prime minister are significant, and the mission is difficult. As Don Watson notes

> We expect him to listen to us and yet to lead us; to obey our will and yet be leader enough to have a will of his own; to reflect our view and yet project his vision. It's a tall order, but one a prime minister had better be seen to obey. If he doesn't, they'll say he's out of touch – and to be told you're out of touch in the modern political environment is like being told the sentence is death[1100].

Watson's view is, of course, coloured by his experiences working for Prime Minister Keating, a leader whose relationship with the Australian people was a difficult and suspicious one. Indeed the Keating tenure provides us with an excellent prism through which to analyse the power the electorate has over the PM, the influence of public opinion, and the extent to which prime ministers are expected to maintain favourable terms with their employers.

Paul Keating was an unpopular leader with a mixed electoral record, who cared little for the trivialities of electoral politics and was not prepared to sacrifice the time taken to cultivate and court public opinion. Rod Cameron, with three decades of experience observing political leaders as the proprietor of Australian National Opinion Polls, saw in Keating a uniqueness when compared with all of the other state and federal political leaders of recent Australian history. The Prime Minister, according to Cameron, 'couldn't care less about popularity... he could do a song and dance, and he had a wonderful ability to charm a percentage of the electorate but he was never highly popular. And popularity was never his goal'[1101].

Large sections of the Australian public saw in Paul Keating an arrogance and an aloofness that contributed greatly to his poor showings in opinion polls. Others admired his energy, intelligence and strength. Whether for him or against him, after so many years in public life, he was either loved or loathed; few had neutral feelings about their Prime Minister. Unfortunately for him, 'he had two thirds of the population disliking him intensely and one third the reverse'[1102]. A monumental Keating effort in 1993 saw Labor triumph in the

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[1099] Ibid, p 19.
[1100] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 9.
[1101] Interview with Rod Cameron, 10 September 2002.
[1102] Ibid.

elections held that year, but voters lay in wait for a Prime Minister who, by March 1996, had fallen drastically out of favour with the Australian people. They deemed him out of touch, excessively preoccupied with his big picture, and removed from the realities of domestic life and the aspirations of middle Australia.

This chapter explores in detail the fraught relationship between Prime Minister Keating and the Australian public as illustrated by opinion polls and federal elections. It turns first to the characteristics attributed to Keating in available polling, and his relative unpopularity throughout the period of his leadership. Next a discussion of the 1993 and 1996 election campaigns and their results is undertaken to draw lessons from Keating's role in the surprising win and the devastating loss. An exploration of the 'hollow centre' of the prime ministership, and Keating's reluctance to participate in what he considered trivial and superficial public aspects of the job follows, before some conclusions are made about the nature of his relationship with the electorate and why the people were willing to reject the Prime Minister so unceremoniously in March 1996.

Paul Keating and Public Opinion

Prime Minister Keating never reached the dizzying heights of public approval achieved by his predecessor Bob Hawke, as recorded in regular opinion polls. Indeed Keating's average ratings over the course of his tenure were the lowest in three decades; in one type of poll quoted by Ian McAllister his 32.3 percent average compared to Hawke's average of 53.1 percent. Even the bumbling Bill McMahon's average of 34.6 percent exceeded Keating's average approval ratings[1103]. Though his popularity went through peaks and troughs, often only a third of the electorate approved or expressed satisfaction with their Prime Minister. McAllister argues 'almost all prime ministers decline in popularity after they gain office', whereas the 'only exception to this pattern

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[1103] Ian McAllister 2001, op cit, p 10; see below for a more comprehensive comparison of the poll numbers garnered by Keating, Hawke and Howard.

is Paul Keating, who started from a low base and remained at that level for the period of his prime ministership'[1104].

Public opinion polls generally record two groups of data on prime ministers. The first gives an indication of the attributes that people associate with their leader, for example trustworthiness, intelligence or compassion. This data is illustrative of how the leader's traits are perceived in the electorate, and how relative strengths and weaknesses are observed. The second group of data includes relative judgements of 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' with the leader, and the related answers to the 'preferred prime minister' question. Both sets of data are provided and analysed below in the context of the Paul Keating Prime Ministership. *Newspoll* data is used primarily because of the respect it has garnered among political commentators and strategists for its accuracy and consistency with internal party polling, and, where possible, it has been backed up by *Australian Election Studies* material below. The result is a comprehensive portrait of public perceptions of Keating and the significant electoral problems he encountered throughout his prime ministerial tenure.

Attributes

The traits commonly associated with Prime Minister Keating were strength, decisiveness, conviction and arrogance[1105]. Supporters saw in him a 'strong, resolute, principled, unyielding, genuine leader', while his many detractors perceived him as 'arrogant, out of touch with middle Australia', and having 'a different value system to their own'[1106]. Polls conducted by Australian Community Research found 'Those who liked Keating believed he was capable, more honest and genuine and a better communicator than his opponent', while 'Those who disliked him said they distrusted him, thought him arrogant and disapproved of the way he obtained the prime

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[1104] Ibid.
[1105] See Mike Seccombe, 'Why We Love To Hate This Man', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 July 1994, p 5.
[1106] Interview with Rod Cameron, 10 September 2002.

ministership'[1107]. His poor initial standing among women, only partially rectified as time wore on, was attributed to his 'bullying' style[1108]. But of all the traits commonly associated with the PM, arrogance stands out, often hovering around the 80 percent mark in published polls. This perception more than any other, according to a comprehensive analysis undertaken by Mike Seccombe in 1994, was why 'Australians love to hate Paul Keating'[1109].

Relying on data provided by Newspoll, and backed up by figures from the 1993 and 1996 *Australian Election Studies,* Tables 8.1 to 8.6 and Figure 8.1 illustrate in more detail the extent to which Australians viewed Prime Minister Keating as arrogant; decisive and strong; compassionate; inflexible; likeable; and trustworthy. The picture painted by this data is largely unfavorable to Keating, who is demonstrably seen as arrogant and inflexible, though decisive and strong. The last box in each table shows the average rating for each attribute over the course of the Prime Ministership.

Table 8.1: Arrogant

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating is Arrogant (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
79	81	81	86	81	84	81	84	85	87	84	83.0

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

Table 8.2: Decisive and Strong

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating is Decisive and Strong (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
68	74	73	67	72	74	79	77	75	80	78	74.3

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

[1107] Quoted in Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 221.

[1108] See, for example, Jim McClelland, 'Women and the Way Women Vote', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 3 March 1993, p 16.

[1109] Mike Seccombe, 'Why We Love To Hate This Man', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 30 July 1994, p 5; see also Mark Baker, 'Free Kick to Mr 84pc So He Digs In The Boots', *Age,* 28 July 1994, p 3.

Table 8.3: Inflexible

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating is Inflexible (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
60	62	60	62	60	67	64	68	69	68	68	64.4

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

Table 8.4: Cares for People

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating Cares for People (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
43	48	53	37	48	44	48	48	45	48	50	46.5

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

Table 8.5: Likeable

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating is Likeable (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
32	38	43	32	43	36	44	40	35	42	41	38.7

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

Table 8.6: Trustworthy

Total Agree that Prime Minister Keating is Trustworthy (percent)											
Sep 92	Feb 93 (1)	Feb 93 (2)	Sep 93	Mar 94	Jul 94	Nov 94	Apr 95	Jul 95	Nov 95	Jan 96	Mean
35	35	37	26	38	34	37	35	35	34	36	34.7

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

Figure 8.1: Public Perceptions of Prime Minister Keating
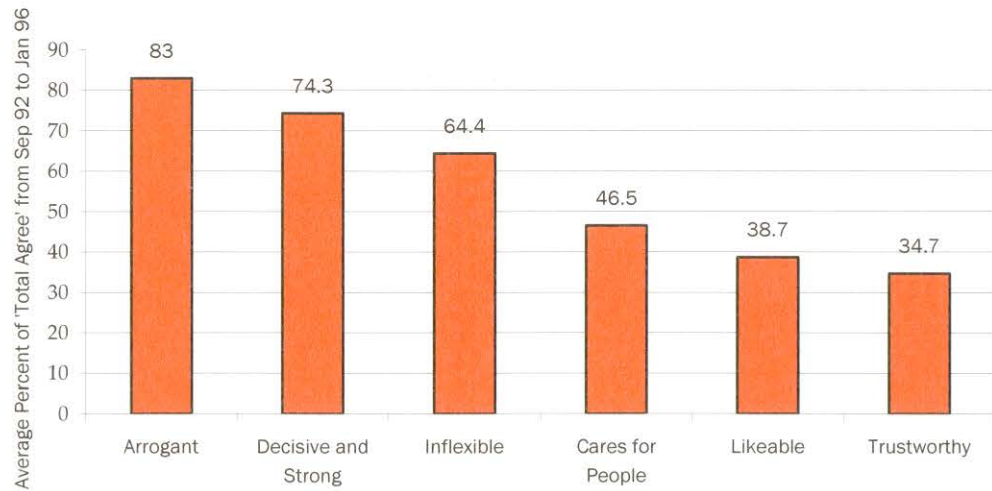
Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

The data presented in Figure 8.1, above, illustrates overwhelmingly that arrogance is the dominant perception of the Prime Minister, with an average of 83 percent of respondents agreeing with that description of the leader. This high number is backed up by the *Australian Election Studies* of 1996[1110], where 54.7 percent of respondents thought the PM was 'extremely' arrogant and 19.9 percent described him as 'quite' arrogant; a total of 74.6 percent. A favourable characteristic – 'decisive and strong' – came in second on the list of Prime Ministerial attributes with a high average score of 74.3 percent. Again this is corroborated by the AES. When respondents were asked in 1993 and 1996 if Paul Keating 'provides strong leadership' they overwhelmingly agreed; 43.4 percent thought this 'extremely' so and 37.7 percent answered that this was 'quite' so, a total of 81.1 percent. Next in descending order, with an average of 64.4 percent, is the perception that Prime Minister Keating was 'inflexible'. Rounding out the picture were three positive perceptions which garnered less than majority support. Only 46.5 percent of respondents described the PM as compassionate ('cares for people'); 38.7 percent deemed him 'likeable'; and just 34.7 percent associated Keating with trustworthiness.

These numbers take on additional meaning when you compare them with those garnered by Keating's prime ministerial successor, John Howard[1111]. The available *Newspoll* data provides telling contrasts between perceptions of the two men.   Howard's average scores are as follows: arrogance 39.3 percent (compared with Keating's 83 percent); decisive and strong 62.3 percent (compared with 74.3 percent for Keating); cares for people 65.8 percent (Keating received an average of 46.5 percent); inflexible 52.3 percent (Keating's average on this question was 64.4 percent); likeable 58.9 percent (compared with Keating's 38.7 percent); and trustworthy 55 percent (Keating received an average of 34.7 percent on this question).   From these comparisons we can conclude that perceptions of Keating as arrogant, decisive and strong, and inflexible are not necessarily traits associated with all prime ministers, but rather characteristics which the Australian people associated specifically with him.   Similarly, his low scores on positive traits such as likeable, trustworthy and cares for people do not appear to be the norm for Australian leaders, making them of particular significance, and negative consequence, for Prime Minister Keating.

Given this data, and that analysed below, it is noteworthy that Paul Keating was able to win an election in 1993.   No Prime Minister since the growing sophistication of modern public opinion polling techniques has endured such long periods of association with negative attributes.   According to the figures above, that Keating was deemed 'decisive and strong' appears to have been his only saving grace.

Waves of Public (Un)Popularity

Prime Minister Keating inherited a Labor Party flagging in the opinion polls and apparently heading for defeat after the knife-edge result of the 1990 election.   His own personal popularity did little to restore Labor's fortunes, with low 'satisfaction' ratings dominating his entire prime ministerial tenure. Though he enjoyed periods where poll respondents preferred him as PM to the

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[1110] The AES did not test 'arrogance' in their 1993 survey.
[1111] Analysis of the Howard data includes all polls conducted up until July 2003.

alternatives – successively John Hewson, Alexander Downer and John Howard – this may have reflected the benefits of incumbency and the periodic inadequacies of at least the first two Liberal leaders Keating faced. Labor also found itself in front at times, though not for extended periods. Here two concerns of polling – satisfaction and preferred prime minister – are graphed and analysed to provide an insight into the up and down but generally unfavourable poll numbers maintained by Prime Minister Keating. The data provided below gives a valuable insight into perceptions of the PM between elections, and the poor relationship with the electorate endured throughout.

Figure 8.2 maps out relative satisfaction with the Prime Minister as gauged at fortnightly intervals by *Newspoll*. We see from the graph that Keating never attained a majority satisfaction rating; the nearest he got was a score of 42 percent around the time of the 1993 election. His worst score for satisfaction fell to 17 percent, garnered only a few months after that election, in a poll conducted August 1993. On the other side of the coin, the numbers for dissatisfaction never went below 42 percent, the number garnered in the first poll of his Prime Ministership, conducted January 1992. The low point in terms of dissatisfaction came in September 1993 when the figure rose to 75 percent of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the way Keating was performing. The average satisfaction rating throughout the period was just 32.5 percent, while dissatisfaction averaged 56.9 percent. This means only one-third of Australians were usually satisfied with Prime Minister Keating's performance.

Figure 8.2: Satisfaction With Prime Minister Keating

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

These numbers take on particular significance when compared with the available data on Bob Hawke and John Howard, Keating's predecessor and successor respectively[1112]. Hawke's average satisfaction rating was 45.2 percent, higher than Keating's 32.5 percent but just lower than the average Howard rating of 46.9 percent. On average, 47.3 percent of *Newspoll* respondents were dissatisfied with Prime Minister Hawke's performance, compared with Howard's average of 41.5 percent. Both leaders returned significantly better results on this question than Keating's average dissatisfaction rating of 56.9 percent. Figure 8.3, below, illustrates just how unpopular Prime Minister Keating was in comparison with Hawke and Howard.

[1112] The available *Newspoll* data for Hawke runs from November 1985 to December 1991, and, for Howard, from August 1996 to July 2003.

Figure 8.3: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction With Hawke, Keating, Howard
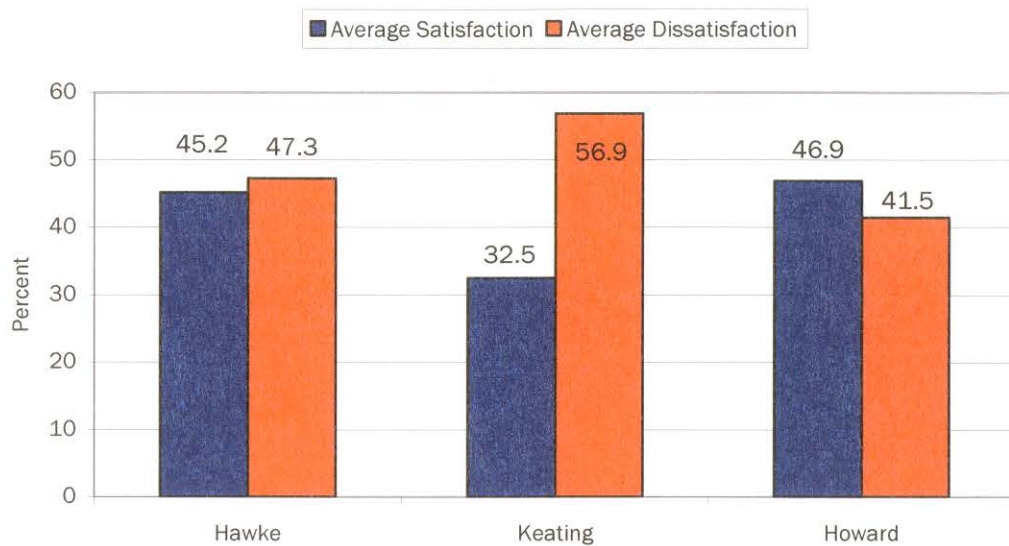
Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

The preferred prime minister data tells a somewhat different story to that provided by the satisfaction measure. Figure 8.4, below, is produced again with the assistance of *Newspoll*. It shows an inconsistent trend, which depends as much on the performance of the Liberal leader as Keating's own. For example, when Downer was floundering towards the end of 1994 the Prime Minister's ratings were predictably higher, as was the case when John Hewson was being destabilised in mid-1994 as a prelude to his own demise. Keating was, on average, preferred as Prime Minister by 38.6 percent of poll respondents; with a high of 53 percent and a low of 27 percent[1113]. The best a Liberal leader rated during this period was 48 percent and the lowest 21 percent, in both cases garnered by Alexander Downer. There are also some other surprising numbers here; for example Paul Keating was preferred as PM over John Howard in the final five polls before the 1996 election, yet Howard still rode significant anti-Keating sentiment all the way to a resounding victory in March of that year. The inconsistency of the data and the effect of the Opposition Leader's performance makes this gauge of public opinion somewhat less reliable than the data relating to satisfaction levels, but in a longitudinal sense we gain from this graph an appreciation of the ups and

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[1113] Hawke's average Preferred PM score was 48.6 percent, and Howard's is 46.7 percent at the time of writing.

downs of the Keating Prime Ministership. Despite consistently low levels of satisfaction with the leader, poll respondents still, at times, preferred the incumbent PM to his Liberal rivals.

Figure 8.4: Preferred Prime Minister 1992 – February 1996

Source: *Newspoll* – www.newspoll.com.au

The data provided in this brief exploration of public opinions of Paul Keating is a useful way to conduct a quantitative analysis of the Prime Minister's relationship with the Australian people. We learn from *Newspoll* and the *Australian Election Studies* that the electorate thought little of Keating personally, remained largely dissatisfied with his work, but preferred him at times to struggling leaders of the opposition. Perceptions of arrogance and inflexibility were partially offset by assessments of strength and decisiveness, but remained dominant. At no stage were a majority of poll respondents satisfied with Prime Minister Keating, which puts the 1993 and 1996 elections in an interesting light. Given the growing importance of leaders to electoral choice[1114], how could such an unpopular man win in 1993 and a

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[1114] See Anthony Mughan 2000, op cit.

'preferred PM' lose in 1996? The extraordinary campaigns and results of the two elections Keating fought as Prime Minister are the subjects to which we now turn.

Campaigning

Periodic elections are the primary ways in which citizens are given the opportunity to hold their elected representatives accountable. Elections 'select decision makers, shape policy, distribute power, and provide venues for debate', according to Mancini and Swanson[1115]. Campaigns have become increasingly centred on television, with 'prepackaged sound bites of candidates, relentlessly aired political television commercials, repeated narrow campaign messages and scripted camera-ready events'[1116] becoming more and more prevalent in democracies around the globe. Australian campaigns are not immune to these worldwide trends; parties and their leaders engage each other largely on the television airwaves and in other media, and the contest can essentially be reduced to one between the prime minister and a prime ministerial aspirant[1117].

Paul Keating was a reluctant campaigner who saw little value in the trivial aspects of his job[1118]. As Michelle Grattan once wrote, he 'comes to the on-the-ground grind of the campaign trail – with its street walks, morning teas, factories, small children and small talk – without the enthusiasm of a Bob Hawke. He is not the sort of politician for whom a row of schoolchildren waving flags is one of life's high points'[1119]. But, when roused, the Prime Minister could adopt the combative stance of a streetfighter, and aggressively take on his opponents. In the 1993 election Keating faced John Hewson, and in 1996 his opponent was John Howard. The first campaign Keating fought as PM saw

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[1115] Paolo Mancini and David L Swanson, 'Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy: Introduction' in David L Swanson and Paolo Mancini (eds), *Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy*, (Connecticut, Praeger, 1996), p 1.

[1116] Fritz Plasser with Gunda Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning: A Worldwide Analysis of Campaign Professionals and Their Practices*, (Connecticut, Praeger, 2002), p 1.

[1117] For an examination of the effects of campaigns on election outcomes, see Thomas M Holbrook, *Do Campaigns Matter?* (London, Sage Publications, 1996).

[1118] See 'The Hollow Centre', below.

him increase Labor's majority in what was almost universally regarded as the 'unwinnable' election, delivering him Government in his own right and drawing plaudits for his individual role in the campaign and his dismantling of Hewson and his main policy, the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The 1996 campaign was almost exclusively a referendum on the Prime Minister himself. Labor's enormous loss saw Keating's legacy tarnished, and much blame was placed at the feet of the resigning leader.

The 1993 election

The 1993 federal election was held Saturday 13 March, and pitted a Labor Party struggling in the polls with an ascendant Coalition led by John Hewson and carrying a radical policy blueprint – *fightback!* – including an unpopular GST. At first Keating considered calling the poll for late 1992, before political circumstances in the states[1120] and advice from Bob Hogg and Graham Richardson[1121], among others, dissuaded him from that course of action. The Prime Minister eventually settled on 13 March 1993, though again this was met with some resistance because of the pending release of dire economic figures during the campaign period[1122]. In the end the Prime Minister consulted senior ministerial colleagues and the National Secretary of the ALP, Bob Hogg, but his mind was made up[1123]. That the Keating view prevailed is, itself, illustrative of prime ministerial prerogative when it comes to calling elections. Once the date was set few gave the PM and Labor any chance of victory[1124]. Pollster Gary Morgan opined that if Keating could win the election he would be 'the greatest salesman ever'[1125].

[1119] Michelle Grattan, 'PM Hits the Campaign Trail of Children and Radio Chats', *Age*, 12 February 1993, p 10.

[1120] For a comprehensive analysis of the political situation in each of the states see Peter Smark, 'Hairshirts and Sin Offer Hard Choices', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1992, p 19.

[1121] See Bruce Jones, 'Keating's Roll at GST's Expense', *Sun Herald*, 13 December 1992, p 27; and Graham Richardson 1994, op cit, p 349.

[1122] See Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, pp 233-4.

[1123] See Michelle Grattan, 'Only One Prize as Poll Draws Closer', *Age*, 8 February 1993, p 15.

[1124] See, for example, Michelle Grattan, 'Keating 's Conundrum - How To Induce Mass Amnesia', *Age*, 13 February 1993, p 13.

[1125] Quoted in Michael Magazanik, 'Stick to Economic Issues, Pollster Tells PM', *Age*, 10 February 1993, p 20.

As Clive Bean noted in his post-election analysis, drawing on sophisticated data from the *Australian Election Studies*, the principal parties contesting the election promoted unusually polarised and clearly differentiated sets of policies which registered with the electorate as such[1126]. That policies played such a prominent role in the campaign is partially due to the Coalition's unorthodox decision to release such detailed proposals. Bean highlighted unemployment, the GST, industrial relations, health, family support and child care as the policy battlegrounds staked out by Labor and the Coalition[1127]. How these issues played out, and the relative success of the parties in promoting their agendas, can be attributed to the strategies of the parties and the performance of the two leaders; Keating and Hewson.

The Liberal Party strategy relied on policy detail, in the form of *fightback!*, and on casting John Hewson as a non-politician and an economist who could rectify the country's substantial economic woes. They conducted rallies around the country where Hewson, somewhat uncomfortably and out of character, would sometimes lead chants of 'Labor has got to go'. The Liberals and Nationals attempted to associate the recession with Prime Minister Keating, and offered a Coalition Government as the only group able to make difficult decisions in the national economic interest.

Keating and Labor, on the one hand, focussed heavily on the radical nature of *fightback!* and relied on a scare campaign against the GST. Central to this was the theme that the GST would have no positive effect on high unemployment. More broadly, according to key ALP strategist Bob Hogg, the 1993 campaign sought to make prominent Hewson's policies on health and Medicare, industrial relations and the role of the unions[1128]. In this respect Labor campaigned, almost as if they were in Opposition, against a detailed set of policies. It was largely a negative campaign which took the focus off Keating's own unpopularity and the extended life of the Government. As Hogg

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[1126] Clive Bean, 'Issues in the 1993 Election', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 29, special issue, 1994, pp 134-57.
[1127] Clive Bean, 'Introduction: The 1993 Election and Australian Electoral Studies in the 1990s', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 29, special issue, 1994, p 2.
[1128] Interview with Bob Hogg, 5 September 2002.

recalls, 'we couldn't afford the spotlight to come on Paul and the ALP, it had to remain on Hewson to the end'[1129].

Paul Keating started the 1993 campaign sluggishly, unable to stick to a clear message and struggling to land any significant hits on the Opposition Leader. Bob Hogg remembers it 'was ten days in before we had Paul concentrating on the campaign'[1130]. At this point in the campaign Keating himself was heard to concede privately that the campaign was 'going down like a turd in a well'[1131]. An urgent meeting was called at Kirribilli House where staff and officials reminded the Prime Minister of the potency of the GST as an issue. Keating 'was on song after that meeting, he stuck to the brief'[1132]. He adopted a combative approach and zeroed in on the enemy – Hewson – and the means by which to destroy him – a negative campaign based on the GST – and pursued both single-mindedly.

As the campaign progressed the Prime Minister made up much ground on Hewson, which encouraged Keating to spend more and more time attacking the GST and broader economic agenda of the Liberals. For example, visiting a Toyota factory in Port Melbourne, the PM discarded a written speech on Labor's industry policy to focus on the GST, unveiling the potent line: 'whenever you put your hand in your pocket, Dr Hewson's hand will be in there, too'[1133]. The Prime Minister also pursued these lines of attack in debates and television appearances with the Opposition Leader, trading some prime ministerial prestige for the gains garnered by more combative attacks on Hewson and his policies, with varying success[1134]. Even a lacklustre Labor policy launch was rescued by the resignation of Canada's Brian Mulroney after a backlash over the bungled implementation of a similar consumption tax to the GST, lending 'credibility to Mr Keating's claims that a GST would push the

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[1129] Ibid.
[1130] Interview with Bob Hogg, 4 September 2002.
[1131] Quoted in David Day 2000, op cit, p 427.
[1132] Interview with Bob Hogg, 4 September 2002.
[1133] Michael Millett, 'Enough of "Mr Nice Guy"', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 1993, p 6.
[1134] See Geoffrey Barker, 'Heat, But Little Light Amid Sound And Fury', *Age*, 19 February 1993, p 8; Geoffrey Barker, 'Dog-eat-dog For The Calm And The Angry', *Age*, 8 March 1993, p 4; and Michelle Grattan, 'PM Pays for GST Airing', *Age*, 19 February 1993, p 8.

economy back into recession'[1135]. Polls steadily improved for Keating and Labor, which buoyed the PM and saw him deliver lines such as 'If you don't understand the GST, don't vote for it. And if you do understand it, you won't vote for it anyway'[1136]. In the campaign's final week the *Sun Herald*'s Andrew Clark wrote that 'In the past two weeks there have been signs that Keating has clawed back some of the lead from the Coalition. But he and other Labor insiders know a major surge is needed in the next week for the ALP to win its fifth election in a row. As it is Keating leads a decade-old Government, dragged down by one million unemployed, and struggling against the political gravity of change'[1137]. Labor was still unlikely to win, the polls indicated, but the Prime Minister's pursuit of Hewson and the GST had put Labor in with a chance of victory.

When the results came in on the evening of 13 March it became rapidly apparent that not only would Labor win the election, but with a slightly increased majority. In the end Labor would win 44.9 percent of the primary vote in the House of Representatives[1138], a surprisingly large swing of +5.5 percent, and 80 seats out of 147, up from 78 seats (out of 148) after the 1990 poll. Bob Hogg believes 'fear' of the GST 'beat loathing' of the Prime Minister[1139]. The 'true believers' victory speech delivered by Keating on election night was received with rapturous admiration by the assembled Party faithful, but was regarded over time as an exclusive and petulant response to the unexpected win. Don Watson, for example, recently wrote that 'Later it was hard not to think that just as they were going to put the axe back in the woodheap the people of Australia heard him say on the television, "This is a victory for the true believers," and they decided to leave it at the back door ready for next time'[1140].

[1135] Bernard Lagan, 'Keating's Week: Thunder, Lost and Regained', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1993, p 11.

[1136] Geoff Kitney and Tony Wright, 'Harder Than Expected, But Cause for Joy', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1993, p 9.

[1137] Andrew Clark, 'Still Fire in the Belly', *Sun Herald*, 7 March 1993, p 15.

[1138] And 43.5 percent in the Senate.

[1139] Interview with Bob Hogg, 4 September 2002.

[1140] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 354; see also Rodney Cavalier, 'An insider on the outside: A personal view of why Labor was always going to lose the 1996 federal election', in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp 23-7.

Regardless, the come from behind effort in 1993 ranked as one of the more astounding campaign feats in modern Australian political history[1141]. The *Age*'s Robyn Dixon explained two days after the election that

> His victory was extraordinary because he must have known in his heart that he could not win, unless all the normal rules of politics were turned on their head. Almost every newspaper editorial in the country had written him off and called for change. During a recession, with a million unemployed and dogged by calls that he should not merely accept responsibility for the economic errors but apologise to the people, he should have lost[1142].

The credit for Labor's victory was placed almost exclusively at the feet of Prime Minister Keating, who executed the attacks on Hewson and the GST with a single-mindedness of purpose that allowed Labor to claw back to a winning position. The Liberals' radical policy approach led to some commentary about them having lost the campaign rather than Labor winning it, an argument which also has merit, though the prosecution of the case can again be partially attributed to the performance of the PM. According to pollster Rod Cameron, the 'fact that the GST or Hewson and the GST were such a plus for Labor was because Keating made it such a plus. It was Keating's capitalising on it that was the key factor[1143]. The *Australian Election Studies* data quoted by Clive Bean concurs, demonstrating the importance of the Labor campaign to the result[1144].

At the outset of the 1993 campaign Keating had told staff that 'This is the start of our own mini-presidential campaign'[1145], and this was the approach that endured throughout the weeks leading up to the poll. The focus was on the Prime Minister and his ability to discredit and dismantle the GST. Michelle Grattan wrote, in this context,

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[1141] Liberal MP David Jull was confident enough to plan a victory party to celebrate the return to Government. He confided to this author that he 'had a couple of cartons of champagne in the garage at home for the celebration in 93. I was reasonably confident we were going to win it. They sat there until 96 (laughs). It was a devastating night'. Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.

[1142] Robyn Dixon, 'Paul Keating', *Age*, 15 March 1993, p 13.

[1143] Interview with Rod Cameron, 10 September 2002.

[1144] Clive Bean, 1994, 'Issues in the 1993 Election', op cit, p 155.

[1145] Quoted in John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 503.

> Paul Keating has completely dominated Labor's campaign. In every way: its timing, its tactics, its presentation. The strengths of the ALP campaign were Mr Keating 's strong points - vigor and toughness. Its faults were his too - a certain inflexibility and insistence on doing what he wanted, in some instances limiting what he did. Ironically, Mr Keating emerged as a more presidential leader and campaigner than his predecessor, Bob Hawke, whose style was characterised as presidential. The Keating office was dominant; the Keating word went[1146].

The late Ian Henderson, then a senior Party official at the ALP's National Secretariat, concurs, telling this author that 'There's no doubt that Keating was the most powerful weapon in Labor's campaign in 93. There's no doubt in my mind whatsoever about that. Keating was a great campaigner. If you were to pick one element of the campaign which was the strongest you'd pick Keating's own performance, his role was immense'[1147]. The presidential campaign of 1993 was replicated, with more emphasis on the Prime Minister's own personal leadership skills, in 1996. Sadly for Paul Keating and the Australian Labor Party, the result was not.

The 1996 election

The 1996 federal election was called 27 January and held 2 March, providing for a 34 day campaign. Characteristically, few were informed of the Prime Minister's preference for the election date until the night before it was called. Even ministers were kept out of the loop; reportedly 'Keating didn't give his ministers the slightest hint of when it would be'[1148], and a cabinet meeting within a week of the day the election was called 'was told nothing' and 'nobody was indelicate enough to ask'[1149]. Labor's campaign director, National Secretary Gary Gray, had been busily preparing for an election since December 1995, knowing well that the Prime Minister would not consult widely on the date and not wanting to be caught out by a snap announcement[1150]. In the end the decision was made the night before 27 January, a small number of calls were made to senior colleagues and officials,

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[1146] Michelle Grattan, 'Keating – Bold, Brazen and a Big Ask', *Age*, 13 March 1993, p 12.
[1147] Interview with Ian Henderson, 19 June 2002.
[1148] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating and His DIY Election', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1996, p 13.
[1149] Alan Ramsey, 'And the Election Date Is ...', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 1996, p 33.

and the race was on[1151]. Few expected Labor to win or counted on Keating to reproduce the heroics of 1993.

Both major parties relied heavily on Prime Minister Keating as the central issue of the 1996 campaign, more important than any policy or ideological differences between Labor and the conservatives[1152]. Anecdotal evidence illustrates the depth of feeling against Keating in the electorate. Liberal MP David Jull remembers 'You'd go out into your electorate and, if you wanted a good chat to make you fell good, you'd just drop the name Paul Keating'[1153]. Labor apparatchik Anthony Chisholm, then a volunteer for Wayne Swan's campaign for the Labor-held suburban Brisbane seat of Lilley, recalls how he would wear an ALP campaign T-shirt 'over to my good mates' houses and their parents would tell me to fuck off', such was their opinion of the Labor leader[1154].

As early as mid-1995 the Coalition dedicated themselves to pursuing Keating as a way of beating Labor. As Geoff Kitney wrote, 'The dominant consideration in the Coalition's strategic plan has been to make Keating the issue and to turn the loathing for him into votes for the Coalition'[1155]. The same commentator had also written, back in May 1995, that

> The Liberal Party, both from the political intelligence it gets from its own polling and the feedback from direct contact between party workers and voters, is convinced that Paul Keating is their biggest electoral asset. They believe voters don't believe Keating any more. They are convinced Keating's credibility is shopworn, so stained and drained by the accumulated scars of 25 years of political battle and 12 years of hard governance, that voters simply won't buy the Keating product next time round[1156].

[1150] See Geoff Kitney, 'No-Policy Strategy May Backfire on Liberals', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1995, p 13.
[1151] Michael Gordon 1996, op cit, p 318; see also Geoff Kitney, 'Why Keating Had to Fire the Last Shot In His Locker', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1996, p 1.
[1152] See John Warhurst, 'Promises and personalities: The House of Representatives election in 1996', in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), p 9.
[1153] Interview with David Jull, 19 September 2002.
[1154] Interview with Anthony Chisholm, 23 March 2002.
[1155] Geoff Kitney, 'High-Risk Deal is Vintage Keating', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1995, p 13.
[1156] Geoff Kitney, 'Beware the Anti-Keating Factor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1995, p 13.

The Coalition's slogans reflected this. The positive 'For All of Us' was an attempt to contrast them with the perceived exclusivity of Labor; and the negative 'Enough is Enough' was a not so subtle swipe at the Labor leader[1157] and thirteen years of ALP Government. John Howard and the Liberal and National Parties rode anti-Keating feeling all the way to victory, declining to release new and detailed policies and relying instead on the poor image of their opponent[1158].

Labor also relied heavily on perceptions of the Prime Minister, in their case the electorate's association of Keating with decisive and strong leadership. So 'Leadership' became the Party's campaign slogan. As Don Watson explains, 'Whatever else people thought about our man, they thought he was a strong leader'[1159]. Senior campaign strategist Seamus Dawes conceded it was no use going around 'pretending that someone else was the prime minister'[1160]. Grattan wrote, at the time, that 'Labor has no equivocation about leaning heavily on its leader ... He's simultaneously one of Labor's negatives and its biggest hope'[1161]. The Leadership slogan was part of a 'presidential campaign – Keating against Howard':

> Keating will be the focus of everything Labor does. He will also be the focus of much that the Coalition does because it believes he is its best asset. Who is right about this will depend on how Keating campaigns. Keating's advocacy skills are a potent political weapon for Labor. There is no-one in politics who can simply encapsulate and sell arguments the way Keating can. But his strength is also his weakness. His capacity for the brilliantly simple is equalled by his capacity for stupid and self-flagellating outbursts of scorn or anger. The former is what voters like about Keating . That latter makes them loathe him. Keating can barely afford one slip from the brilliant to the bad if Labor is to succeed in the electoral tasks it faces[1162].

[1157] See Adele Horin, 'Winning The Way Into A Woman's Vote', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February 1996, p 2.

[1158] For a detailed breakdown of the Liberal Party's campaign strategy by a key strategist, see Andrew Robb, 'The Liberal Party campaign' in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp 34-41.

[1159] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 681.

[1160] Pamela Williams 1997, *The Victory*, op cit, pp 225-6.

[1161] Michelle Grattan, 'ALP Gambles on Keating Factor Being a Plus', *Age*, 29 January 1996, p 9.

[1162] Geoff Kitney, 'Keating and His DIY Election', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1996, p 13.

The Labor campaign was thus built upon the recognition that the Prime Minister was Labor's only hope, and upon a gamble that he could bring Labor out of the mire once again. With Keating not highly regarded by a majority of the electorate[1163], this was a strategy unlikely to bring victory to the ALP.

The 1996 federal election campaign attracted little interest and changed few votes[1164]. For Paul Keating, it was essentially a month-long funeral procession, with no headway made in the polls and a series of mistakes such as the forged letters affair[1165] preventing any clawing back of lost votes. As John Warhurst noted, 'the coalition parties began and finished the campaign for the House of Representatives well in front'[1166]. The media commentary throughout the campaign stressed the inevitability of Labor's impending defeat. Take, for example, this comment by Alan Ramsey: 'Just three days into a five-week campaign and already Paul Keating looks and behaves like a politician staring defeat full in the face. While John Howard campaigns in a cocoon, without detailed policies and carefully insulated from the risks of talking himself into trouble, the Prime Minister is floundering and cannot hide it'[1167]. The policy launch was low key[1168] and, until the final two weeks, the Prime Minister campaigned largely without passion. The high point was probably when a crowd of cheering Sydney private school girls greeted Keating in the manner of a rock star, transforming him 'For a strange and memorable moment yesterday' into 'a Bob Hawke' – 'The bloke the mob want to touch'[1169]. Largely, however, Keating campaign was 'one of fits and starts[1170].

[1163] But, paradoxically, preferred as PM over John Howard. See above.

[1164] Clive Bean and Ian McAllister, 'Short-term influences on voting behaviour in the 1996 election' in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp 190-1.

[1165] Treasurer Ralph Willis had received what turned out to be forged letters outlining Shadow Treasurer Peter Costello's plans for a state tax hike, and announced the 'leak' to the media. This cost Labor momentum in the closing days of the campaign. See John Warhurst, 'Promises and personalities: The House of Representatives election in 1996', in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), p 9.

[1166] Ibid, p 3. See also p 5 of this chapter for a useful chronology of the campaign.

[1167] Alan Ramsey, 'PM Can't Hide It: He's Looking Like a Loser', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1996, p 1.

[1168] Sally Loane, 'Clean-Cut Leader Keeps It Simple', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 1996, p 8.

[1169] Michelle Grattan, 'Paulmania Hits, And PM Walks on Mortar', *Age*, 23 February 1996, p 1.

[1170] Innes Willox, 'An Easy Keating Leads a Campaign of Fits and Starts', *Age*, 1 March 1996, p 11.

One commentator described the phases of the Prime Minister's campaign thus:

> Phase one was the now traditional bad start, with the Prime Minister struggling to get into any sort of rhythm and the ALP machine badly out of synch with its own candidate. By the second week, discipline had been restored, with Keating and other senior Government ministers sniping away effectively at flaws in just released Coalition policies. A good performance in the first debate, a measured policy launch and some ineptly targeted cuts in the Coalition's costings document, enabled Labor to maintain its momentum in the third week. ... But it was not enough to sustain Labor through the critical third phase of the campaign, and Keating knew it. While the Government had made some dent on Howard's lead, Labor was still trailing - according to its own research and the published polls - by a margin of between five and eight points[1171].

Little could be done to rectify Labor's poor position in the polls, it seemed voters had made up their mind to install Howard and the Coalition in Keating and the ALP's place.

The result was devastating for the Prime Minister and the Labor Party, whose primary vote in the House of Representatives dropped 6.2 percent to only 38.8 percent[1172]. Only 49 MPs remained, a loss of 31 seats since the 1993 poll, and eight Government ministers lost their seats[1173]. Reasons for the massive repudiation of the Government include long-term incumbency and the swing of the electoral pendulum, though with a campaign based so heavily on Paul Keating, by both sides, it is difficult not to conclude that the Prime Minister's own unpopularity was a significant factor[1174]. Don Watson attempted a Keating-centric explanation for the loss when he wrote that

> 'leadership' tied his hands. Many things beat him in the election, including some he inflicted on himself before and during the campaign, but he had always wrestled his way over the obstacles, just as he had overcome the contradictions in himself. Some people said he fought the campaign as if half asleep, that he seemed not to be able to raise any passion; not even to chase down the old enemy, the man who stood for everything he despised and from whose small, mean grasp he reckoned he had saved the country. He wasn't half asleep as much as half out of

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[1171] Michael Millett, 'Keating's Final Hope Rests In Last-Ditch Manoeuvres', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 1996, p 27; see also Innes Willox, 'An Easy Keating Leads a Campaign of Fits and Starts', *Age*, 1 March 1996, p 11.
[1172] 36.2 percent in the Senate, down 7.4 percent on 1993 figures.
[1173] John Warhurst 1997, op cit, p 13; for a detailed breakdown of seats and swings see also Malcolm Mackerras, 'Statistical analysis of the results' in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst (eds), *The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election*, (St Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997), pp 207-27.
[1174] Clive Bean and Ian McAllister 1997, op cit, p 206.

character. He was our Achilles and we had sent him out to fight like Paris[1175].

Whatever the explanation, Keating could not rouse himself for this final battle, and he resigned, ending a four and a quarter year tenure in the prime ministership. By 1996 public opinion had caught up with Paul Keating, and unceremoniously removed him from office. The lesson is that ultimate power of tenure is held, and periodically exercised, by the *demos*, in this case the Australian electorate.

The Hollow Centre

Campaigning was a chore for Keating because he eschewed what he considered to be the trivial aspects of public life. Arguably, 'Keating was an unusual prime minister in no stranger way than this: he seemed not to understand that he would make himself more popular and trusted if he played sometimes to the hollow centre of the job – to the ceremonial, sentimental, clichéd dimension of it'[1176]. Don Watson further describes this aspect of the Prime Minister's persona. He believes Keating 'would have been happy if someone had said, "Paul, you can be prime minister, but we won't tell anybody"'[1177]. Watson concludes that, 'Keating recoiled from the pursuit of popularity and trust, which is to say from the essence of politics'[1178] which meant 'that by the time of his prime ministership Paul Keating was in some fundamental ways unsuited to political life'[1179]. Public opinion was, therefore, an untapped resource throughout the Keating Prime Ministership; he did little to cultivate a following when that involved superficiality or fake forays into the garnering of popularity. This meant, 'of all the things the public at all levels want the prime minister to be, he wasn't prepared to be quite a few of them'[1180].

[1175] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 692.
[1176] Ibid, p 470.
[1177] Ibid, p 349.
[1178] Ibid, p 470.
[1179] Ibid, p 631.
[1180] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

The political 'stunt' and the 'meet and greet' or 'grip and grin' are the staples of modern electoral politics, but Prime Minister Keating largely shunned them in favour of policy development and public advocacy. On the few occasions where the PM was lured out among 'the people' his performance was impressive[1181]. Geoff Walsh, a key aide who had also advised Bob Hawke, remembers Keating, on a trip to south western Queensland to speak with farmers about the drought, as very much at ease with ordinary Australians. Walsh believes 'if times had been different in terms of his family responsibilities, he'd have done more' of those grass roots engagements[1182].

Another example of Keating's occasional effectiveness in public forums came in September 1992 with a Prime Ministerial visit to a *Holeproof* underwear factory. A relaxed and jovial PM told the assembled workers: '"As you know, I've always been bagged for my suits; you know that ... It's not often that I walk around with the product of the factory that I'm in, but I have the Holeproof undies on today." He expanded on the matter, outlining just what kind of pants he preferred. "I like the full ones, I like a bit of room," he said, jabbing at his waistline'[1183]. Despite comical and 'every-man' performances like this one, staff still struggled to get him out for the occasional media stunt. Press Secretary Greg Turnbull recalls that 'if you went to him in his office and said let's go to an underwear factory and crack some gags, he'd send you to a psychiatrist!'[1184]. Watson adds that 'tell him he had to traipse around some shopping mall for the sake of the cameras and his good nature would be replaced by the bad'[1185].

After he left office Paul Keating reflected on the superficial aspects of the prime ministership. He believed that 'The twenty second grabs and the photo opportunities are what you have to put up with to convince people about the ideas, but they are not what it is all about'[1186]. Turnbull remembers, in a

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[1181] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.
[1182] Interview with Geoff Walsh, 5 August 2003.
[1183] Julie Lewis, 'Keating Drops His Druthers: "I Like the Full Ones"', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 1992, p 3.
[1184] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[1185] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 631.
[1186] Paul Keating, *The Labor Government 1983-1996*, Speech Delivered 19 March 1999, www.keating.org.au.

similar way, the PM treating trivial campaign activities as just 'something he had to do'[1187]. As time wore on, he became decreasingly willing to perform the trivial aspects of the job publicly, perhaps, as Turnbull argues, because 'he'd had so many years of doing the hard yards for publicity and column space, and he was over it'[1188]. Without greater attention to aspects of maintaining positive public opinion it is unsurprising that the Prime Minister's poll numbers remained so low throughout.

Pressing the Flesh

Populist prime ministers such as Bob Hawke are often described as 'of the people'; they have a relationship with electors built upon a two-way relationship of admiration and trust. Paul Keating was never credibly described as a man of the people or as a populist; he was a more authoritarian leader who thought his best service to the people would come from policy outcomes and by steering the nation into the future[1189]. This approach inevitably led to charges of arrogance and authoritarianism.

If we believe the opinion polls and take note of debates over the Keating legacy that have raged since his demise in 1996, we can see that people had and still have strong opinions about him. He is loved, it seems, or he is hated. His relationship with the Australian voting public is a complex one, but few are left without strong opinions of the man who led Australia in the early to mid 1990s. Within the ALP too, a Party that cherishes its history and its leaders, there are strong opinions. Some blame him for relegating Labor to the wilderness post-1996, but he still elicits the loudest cheer from Labor faithful when they gather to honour the icons of the movement such as Whitlam, Wran and Hawke.

[1187] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.

[1188] Ibid. Keating's disinterest in public events could also, allegedly, extent to Party functions. Graham Richardson alleged in an interview, for example, 'one little incident when I went to him four or five months after the election in 93 and said to him, mate give me your diary and I'll put in two Labor Party functions a month. And they'll all love you and they'll clap you but of course they will tell you where we're going wrong. Because that's what happens at Labor Party functions they are fairly representative of working class Australians and you'll find out what they think. And he said 'mate, if I had to do that it wouldn't be worth being prime minister'.

A useful prism through which to view Prime Minister Keating's fraught relationship with the Australian people is provided by Don Watson's *Recollections* and Les Carlyon's review of the book. Responding to a sentiment contained in Watson's work, that constituents thought 'not that he was bad or mad, or brought harm to the country, but he wouldn't *speak* to them and they could not speak to him'[1190], Carlyon, wrote in the *Bulletin* that 'Paul Keating was always going to be difficult as prime minister' because 'He thought he was an artist and the people thought he was a politician. He wanted to tidy up the cultural life of the nation and the people wanted him to do something about the recession. He wanted the people to see him in all his genius. The people wanted him to see *them*, to acknowledge that they were actually out there and hurting, partly because about 1 million of them were out of work'[1191]. The people wanted their leader to explain to them why his ideas about Asian engagement, indigenous affairs, and the republic were in their interests, according to Carlyon[1192]. In the end 'It was like two people shouting at each other from mountaintops during a windstorm. Keating hectored the people for four years and they shouted back. One never heard the other'[1193].

Part of the difficulty was that Prime Minister Keating was pursuing the 'big picture', encompassing, for example, republicanism[1194], at the cost of being seen to be out of touch with the domestic concerns of middle Australia. Mark Latham, Member for Werriwa, explained this situation thus:

> Paul was probably a victim of the electorate's disengagement from big issues. They were obviously reasonably well-engaged throughout the 80s but then after he won in 93, the feedback I was getting in my electorate was that people were looking for the little nuggets of progress, the little things that could make a positive difference in their own life but Paul was off on his big picture. It was a great, exciting agenda but there was a communications gap – people were looking for smaller picture and he was on a bigger canvas … There was a disconnection there that made

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[1189] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 210.
[1190] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 394.
[1191] Les Carlyon, 'The Paul Guy', *Bulletin*, 4 June 2002, pp 28-30.
[1192] Ibid.
[1193] Ibid.
[1194] Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 429-30. For a comprehensive analysis of Keating's effect on support for a republic, and the republic issue more broadly, see Christian Leithner, 'Popular Support for "Mr Keating's Republic"', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 29, no 2, 1994, pp 354-60.

> the relationship with the electorate awkward. The people who understood the big picture absolutely loved it, but the challenge was getting more Australians to understand it[1195].

Graham Richardson puts a more critical spin on this aspect of the relationship, arguing that the 1993 election made Keating more aloof and remote from everyday concerns, and he got more and more interested in the Asian connection and a whole lot of stuff that the electorate weren't interested in'[1196]. His agenda was, in Richardson's words, 'fairly alien to the mob'[1197].

Though the relationship could deteriorate into mutual disdain – Keating, when asked 'what he would do if he lost the election' in 1993 allegedly said 'he would tell the Australian people that they were idiots and resign'[1198] – it was largely one characterised by missed opportunities for the Prime Minister. He could charm small groups of people but could not charm a populace into signing up to his agenda. Watson argues[1199]

> The story of his prime ministership was in part about persuading the people that he used his strength in their interests. Keating was never more than a couple of breaths away from earning the country's respect: a word, a gesture, a gummy smile away from overcoming their distaste. But it may as well have been a hundred miles dividing them so long as they thought what he did was for his satisfaction rather than theirs'[1200].

The problem was one of communication, where the electorate 'wanted to tell their story' and Keating 'wanted to tell his'[1201]. Unfortunately for Keating, the 'difference was that the people had time on their side, and they held the gun'[1202].

Prime Minister Paul Keating never enthusiastically pursued popularity, and he never achieved it. The electorate considered him arrogant, inflexible and out of touch as well as decisive and strong. When roused and focussed, as in March 1993, he could campaign effectively, but more as a warrior for the cause rather than as a populist harnesser of votes. When the issue became

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[1195] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[1196] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[1197] Ibid.
[1198] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 303.
[1199] Ibid, p 401.
[1200] Ibid, p 244.
[1201] Ibid, p 616.

the Prime Minister himself, in 1996, the electorate was sufficiently tired of Keating and Labor, and convinced their interests and priorities diverged, that they could throw him out and install John Howard as PM in Keating's place.

Modern political campaigning and media pressures place prime ministers and opposition leaders front and centre in election campaigns. At the same time, and likely contributing to this trend as well as being the result of it, leadership is an increasingly important determinant of voter choice[1203]. Campaigns have become more and more individualised and focussed on alternative leaders. In 1996 this trend reached a new Australian peak, with both parties relying heavily on the theme in their alternative campaigns.

Electoral defeat is one of a handful of ways by which prime ministers can be removed from office. The opportunity mostly comes only every three years, but the power is exercised periodically. The demise of Prime Minister Keating came at the ballot box. Though he dominated his subservient Party caucus, an equally acquiescent cabinet, and the parliament, the insufficient attention paid to public opinion, and its chief conduit the media, had dire, indeed fatal, consequences for his leadership.

[1202] Ibid.
[1203] See Ian McAllister 2004/forthcoming, op cit.

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Paul Keating and

Prime Ministerial Leadership in Australia

In the broad electorate Keating did not seem to understand the meaning of *primus inter pares*. It was as if the idea was foreign to him. Of course we are all equal – we are born equal, we die equal and are equal in the eyes of God. But *primus inter pares* is a principle of leadership, and Keating understood leadership to mean *doing* something, not *being* something[1204].

He handpicked his ministry, governed by cronyism and the dictates of presidential fiat, ignored his Caucus in the same way he ignored Parliament, forgot all about normal prudent political management in his obsessive pursuit of his 'big picture', and was utterly contemptuous of criticism. And what did the Labor Party do? Nothing! It let Keating do as he liked. His party rolled over in the same way his Cabinet and his Caucus rolled over[1205].

Virtually the whole Government seemed to be seated at the banquet tables of the National Press Club yesterday. But it was an erroneous impression, based solely on the weight of numbers. In fact, virtually the whole Government was standing behind the lectern. The Government's name is Paul Keating[1206].

When Paul Keating fronted the National Press Club in December 1990 to deliver the Placido Domingo speech he spoke at length about the virtues of political leadership and the opportunities it brings to those willing to use the substantial power that resides in high office. Not knowing for certain that the Australian Prime Ministership lay waiting for him in a year's time, we can still nonetheless evaluate Keating's leadership against the backdrop of such an important speech. Though few would equate him with the historical figures whose virtues he extolled, the notion that leaders are there to point the way for their countries and aggressively pursue reform is something that Keating delivered upon. Even the many critics of his Prime Ministership would

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[1204] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 210.
[1205] Alan Ramsey, 'No-one To Blame Except Himself', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1996, p 35.

concede that Keating's tenure from 1991 to 1996 was marked by an ambitious reform program which altered dramatically the very nature of Australian political debate. His promise, on wresting the leadership from Bob Hawke on that December day in 1991, to provide 'direction, strategy, esprit de corps, enthusiasm and, dare I say it, where necessary, a touch of excitement'[1207] was fulfilled. He exited the stage in 1996 as he had entered it; as a reformer and an intriguing political figure.

Any analysis of Prime Minister Keating confronts extreme and divergent views; between the positive and the negative, the strengths and weaknesses, the combative and the intellectual, the energised and the detached, the listener and the lecturer, the articulate and the foul-mouthed, the decisive and the divisive[1208], the painter of big pictures and the destroyer of opponents, the Bankstown boy and the antique collector, the brilliant and the mad[1209], the *brawler* and the *statesman*. The Prime Ministership, too, was far from consistent, it endured many troughs and enjoyed some peaks. Borrowing one commentator's description, it was a 'surreal exercise in self-destruction punctuated by some utterly magic moments'[1210]. Participants and commentators were true believers or they were enemies, there was no middle ground. You were for Keating or against him, an admirer of the big picture or a troglodyte lacking vision.

Paul Keating, like all Australian prime ministers, contended with competing sources of power and influence residing in institutions such as the party, cabinet and the outer ministry, alternative sources of advice, both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament, the media and the electorate. How leaders navigate these is the key determinant of their own authority. Paul Keating was a skilful Prime Minister when it came to dominating the ALP Caucus, his ministry and the House of Representatives. Compliant colleagues increasingly

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1206 Mike Seccombe, 'Keating's Banquet Offers Plenty to Chew On', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1993, p 7.
1207 Paul Keating quoted in Edna Carew 1992, op cit, p 292.
1208 Michelle Grattan, 'Decisive and Divisive – The Keating Years', *Age*, 23 December 1995, p 8.
1209 Interview with Mike Steketee, 20 August 2002.
1210 Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.

deferred to the PM, especially after the improbable 1993 election win. Parliament was the forum utilised for the dismantling of opponents and motivation of colleagues. The substantial resource of the Prime Minister's Office was drawn upon, as were other sources of advice within and outside of the Government, though not in a coordinated or consistent way. Ad hoc advisory arrangements prevailed, as did a reliance on a small band of trusted advisers. With dire consequences, important relationships with the Australian electorate and their key conduit of information on their leader – the media – lay neglected and atrophied. Prime Minister Keating's unwillingness to engage the media, their abandonment of him, and the electorate's disenchantment with a leader increasingly perceived as out of touch, represents the failure of his tenure. The people possessed a power over the Prime Minister that could not be nullified by his dominance of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, the Commonwealth Parliament, or the cabinet system.

Two Prime Ministerships

The Paul Keating Prime Ministership is most appropriately viewed as two separate periods punctuated by the 1993 federal election[1211]. In the first period – December 1991 to March 1993 – we observe an engaged but not yet legitimised PM working desperately hard to heal the wounds of the leadership challenges, revive Labor's lagging fortunes and turn back what was then seen as the inevitable electoral tidal wave about to break over the Government. The second period – March 1993 to March 1996 – represents a period of growing isolation from the demands of domestic political management, an estrangement from the media, an almost total dominance of subservient colleagues, prime ministerial fatigue, and electoral disengagement.

That Keating was able to steer the Labor Government clear of electoral defeat in 1993 is a key reason Keating was afforded the power to isolate himself

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[1211] See Michelle Grattan, 'Decisive and Divisive – The Keating Years', *Age*, 23 December 1995, p 8; interview with Ian Henderson, 19 June 2002.

from some of the demands of effective political leadership. Graham Richardson, for example, felt

> 93 was in a personal sense the best thing and the worst thing that ever happened to him. It made him an elected prime minister which is pretty special, but it also enabled him to convince himself that he had done it, and that inevitably meant that the press were banned and so were a lot of people he didn't like very much. And he became much more insular[1212].

Another colleague, Neal Blewett, felt the 1993 win led to 'a triumphant sense of his [Keating's] own vindication and the temptations to a presidential style were much greater[1213]. An indication of the Prime Minister's own thinking is provided by one close aide who recounted that 'Paul came out of the 93 election thinking he'd done a pretty good, combative, rescue mission behind enemy lines and his attitude was "fuck the lot of you, I'm going to attend the priorities I perceive" .... He felt that he had single-handedly dragged himself, the Labor Party, the Labor Government across the line'[1214]. This attitude contributed to an aloofness on the part of the Prime Minister which colleagues, the media and the electorate found disheartening, especially after such a close election in 1993 and the granting of another chance for Labor[1215]. From then on, though, it is hard not to conclude, as Ramsey did, that 'Keating ignored his reprieve and took his victory as business as usual'[1216].

Another explanation for Prime Ministerial neglect of some of the key duties, constituencies and institutions of leadership was that, perhaps by December 1991 and certainly by March 1993, Keating had run out of steam, was sapped of energy and losing interest in Australian domestic politics, and had convinced himself that he reached the Prime Ministership too late in his career[1217]. Keating confidante, Mark Ryan, believes 'the fight with Bob [Hawke] sapped Paul of a lot of the energy and the inner well spring of

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[1212] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.
[1213] Interview with Neal Blewett, 28 July 2002.
[1214] Interview with senior Keating aide.
[1215] See Mike Seccombe and Bernard Lagan, 'Alone', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 1993, p 1; Tony Wright, 'The Liberals Dilemma: When To Dump Downer?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 September 1994, p 15.
[1216] Alan Ramsey, 'No-one To Blame Except Himself', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1996, p 35.

motivation and enthusiasm that might have been there if he had got the job a bit earlier when he was younger, fitter, and feeling that he got the job at the right time'[1218]. This analysis points to the conclusion that Keating was running out of steam over the course of his Prime Ministership and lacked the physical stamina to deal with some aspects of the job. As he told one adviser, it was the responsibility of the job, rather than the hours necessarily, which sapped him of his vitality[1219].

Boredom is another factor which seems to have afflicted Prime Minister Keating and attracted the attention of the media. Don Watson wrote that 'Boredom was the feeling he could not conceal … He had grown tired of politics' magic lantern show years before'[1220]. The PM had tired of the everyday aspects of the job and 'could not get excited until the stakes were very high, preferably a matter of life and death'[1221]. Keating himself declared in mid-1994 that he was 'sick to death of day-to-day politics', 'sick to death of the Opposition' and 'sick to death' of the Press Gallery[1222]. This led to the Prime Minister being more selective with the tasks he performed; for example limiting Question Time appearances and cutting back on media commitments[1223]. This, inevitably, led to some perceptions that 'he sometimes did not seem to want the job he had always coveted'[1224]. Turnbull attributes this simply to 'human nature, weariness, exhaustion, and low-level depression'[1225], but the manifestations of his periodic lack of interest in the position could almost reach a serious climax, as was the case in the winter of 1994 when the PM reportedly considered resigning as a result of his exhaustion and poor health, was advised to do so by senior advisers, but changed his mind[1226].

[1217] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 29-30; Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002; Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.
[1218] Interview with Mark Ryan, 12 September 2002.
[1219] Interview with senior Keating aide.
[1220] Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 94.
[1221] Ibid, pp 225-6.
[1222] Quoted in Tony Wright, 'The Devil in Keating's Tongue', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 1994, p 33.
[1223] See Geoff Kitney, 'First Hints of Caesar's Abdication', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1994, p 13.
[1224] Ibid, p 196.
[1225] Interview with Greg Turnbull, 20 July 2002.
[1226] Don Watson 2002, op cit, pp 502-3.

Paul Keating's work habits reflected all of these factors; boredom, tiredness and disenchantment. He confessed to Watson 'that he stayed away from meetings and the office when he could and, when he couldn't, switched himself off'[1227]. Rumours circulated that the Prime Minister would often stay in bed until midday, taking only selected phone calls and conserving his energy. John Edwards recalls the PM arriving at work, on an average day, between 10 and 11 am[1228]. Regardless of the time Keating arrived for work, there is a general, chronicled agreement among interviewees and published commentary that the Prime Minister worked shorter and shorter hours, and spent more and more time at the Lodge. A quarter century in the Parliament and more than a decade in cabinet had taken their toll, with implications for the Keating Prime Ministership and the performance of the Labor Government.

Some of the ups and downs of the Keating Prime Ministership can be attributed to alternating periods of engagement and isolation, while others can be tied to the personal style of the PM. Michael Lavarch recounted in an interview how Keating

> really was fits and starts. He would be incredibly engaged for periods, and there would be enormous personal energy displayed by him and then for other periods there would seem to be quite a hiatus, he was quite detached really ... He was patchy, he could be quite inspiring at the peaks, and then there were quite a few troughs where he seemed to be a bit detached from it all[1229].

Even when engaged, however, the Keating style could create problems for the Government. The best example of this came with the long and drawn-out saga involving Carmen Lawrence and the Royal Commission. This left the ALP floundering for months, and has been labelled one of the more significant issues leading to the scale of the 1996 election result by figures including the Liberal Party's then campaign director, Andrew Robb[1230]. That Keating stood

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[1227] Ibid.

[1228] John Edwards 1996, op cit, p 16.

[1229] Interview with Michael Lavarch, 26 June 2002.

[1230] Graham Richardson: 'Well it was a really silly decision to stick with Lawrence. Because Lawrence really hurt him badly. I remember I did an interview on the Sunday program with Andrew Robb, who nominated that as the single most important thing that happened to them in the lead-up. It meant that they didn't have to produce policies or anything because the

by Lawrence is evidence of the Prime Minister's remarkable loyalty at some cost to his own standing[1231]. Other key moments for the Labor Government during Keating's tenure can similarly be attributed to aspects of his personal style. The 1993 budget fiasco reflected stubbornness and a failure to consult. The significant achievements – winning in 1993; the passage of Mabo legislation; setting in train the next stage of the republican program; and APEC, for example – demonstrated the Prime Minister's dogged determination; policy vision; advocacy skills; and rhetorical abilities.

The Keating legacy is a mixed one, comprising significant achievements as well as missed opportunities and some failures. On the positive side, the Prime Minister's remarkable effort in 1993 to wrest the election away from John Hewson will be remembered fondly by Labor Party operatives and supporters. Michelle Grattan believes that 'If Paul Keating had been hit by the proverbial bus in April 1993 he would have gone into history a hero. The man who did the impossible'[1232]. Don Russell argues Keating will be remembered for a time when Labor was the natural Party of government, and adding that the 'amazing thing is that Hawke and Keating won all those elections, not that Keating lost the last one'[1233]. Paul Kelly also highlights the legacy of the 1993 win, calling it a 'huge political achievement'[1234]. Shaun Carney labels that win 'the most remarkable victory in the history of the Labor Party'[1235].

But it is the policy achievements, the articulation of a new national identity and the bold directions in which Keating pointed that constitute the most important aspects of his Prime Ministerial legacy. Though the following quote comes from someone with a stake in the Keating legacy, it is nonetheless illustrative. Don Russell believes Keating 'made the country feel good about itself. He lifted horizons. Made people think about what was possible. I think the country was different, and people will associate that with him rather than

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spectre of her was hanging over the Government. It paralysed the Government for a very long time'; interview conducted 24 June 2002.

[1231] See Don Watson 2002, op cit, p 621; and interview with John O'Callaghan, 20 March 2002.

[1232] Michelle Grattan, 'Sometimes Keating Must Long For a Miracle', *Age*, 29 July 1995, p 17.

[1233] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.

[1234] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.

[1235] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.

just a change in the world. It was a sort of time when the country was taller and braver'[1236]. Mark Latham argues Keating will be seen as a prime minister who started some very important reforms – the republic, native title' and who 'was a great political combatant and a good parliamentarian'[1237]. In more glowing terms, journalist Michael Gawenda penned a portrait of Paul Keating's Prime Ministerial legacy. Soon after the 1996 election he wrote that Keating

> is, on any reckoning, the most significant Labor politician of the post-war period, eclipsing both Whitlam and Hawke in terms of the lasting impact he has had on both the Labor Party and on the country. In fact, it could be argued that Keating has had a greater impact on the shape of Australia than any post-war Australian politician, an impact on a par with that of Menzies, whose place in history is assured not least on the basis of his longevity. So profound has been Keating 's influence on the political landscape during the past 13 years that the nature of political discourse, the language, tactics, spirit of political debate, will change with his passing. He brought a passion and an intensity to politics that was startling. There are of course many people who will think his passing is no bad thing - there were certainly a huge number of them on Saturday who decided it was time to end his political career - but even they would probably concede that Keating 's legacy is a substantial one[1238].

Asked to evaluate this legacy, Margo Kingston told this author that she believed Keating's place in history is safe; 'in the end he might become loved, and he'll hate that more than anything else'[1239].

Others, even some who were intimately involved in the Labor Government under Keating, have a more mixed view of his legacy. Ian Henderson, for example, a senior ALP official until 1994, believes Prime Minister Keating 'will be remembered as mixed and flawed' in the sense that, though he won the 1993 election, he could not capitalise and set Labor up for more victories[1240]. The notion that Labor under Keating missed opportunities is a common criticism of the Prime Minister. Carney's opinion is that Keating 'was perhaps a person who didn't fulfil his potential as Prime Minister'[1241] and Michael Gordon believes 'any objective assessment has to say that the Keating prime

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[1236] Interview with Don Russell, 25 November 2002.
[1237] Interview with Mark Latham, 3 June 2002.
[1238] Michael Gawenda, 'A True Believer', *Age*, 4 March 1996, p 12.
[1239] Interview with Margo Kingston, 21 August 2002.
[1240] Interview with Ian Henderson, 19 June 2002.
[1241] Interview with Shaun Carney, 28 August 2002.

ministership failed to deliver on the promise'[1242]. More critically, Geoff Kitney offers the following judgement, saying the Keating Prime Ministership was 'disappointing' because

> It promised a huge amount. It could have changed Australia. It could have created the contemporary liberal Australia that we could have been. But he threw it all way and gave the future to the conservatives he despised. I think a lot of people in the Party will never forgive him for that. There was tremendous regard for him in the Party because he was a true Labor warrior who was prepared to stand at the front and take the shots and be absolutely courageous for the cause. The wilful way that he handed it over to Howard, the unwillingness to recognise fault on his part, to recognise the loss of touch with ordinary people out in the suburbs[1243].

Alan Ramsey also criticised Keating for wasting the opportunity provided by the 1993 election victory, writing bluntly that the PM had 'simply pissed it up against the wall'[1244]. John Button told this author that Keating 'had so much ability, but he let it go'[1245], and Glenn Milne believes 'there was a terrible gap between what he promised and what he delivered'[1246]. Paul Kelly criticises the Prime Minister for failing to capitalise on the 1993 win and for failing to more effectively market the big picture[1247], whereas Graham Richardson remarked in an interview that Keating 'squandered 'the potential for greatness which he had'[1248]. That each of these criticisms relate to missed opportunities is an indication of the hope that participants and commentators held for Prime Minister Keating after he was legitimised by the 1993 election win.

Paul Keating and Prime Ministerial Leadership in Australia

An Australian prime minister's tenure can end only six ways. They can die in office (John Curtin in 1945, for example), be rejected in the party room (Bob Hawke in 1991), lose the support of the parliament (Robert Menzies, 1941), be dismissed by the governor-general (Gough Whitlam in 1975) lose their

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[1242] Interview with Michael Gordon, 19 September 2002.
[1243] Interview with Geoff Kitney, 4 November 2002.
[1244] Alan Ramsey, 'No-one To Blame Except Himself', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 1996, p 35.
[1245] Interview with John Button, 25 June 2002.
[1246] Interview with Glenn Milne, 9 September 2002.
[1247] Interview with Paul Kelly, 4 November 2002.
[1248] Interview with Graham Richardson, 24 June 2002.

party's majority at a federal election and therefore be voted out of office (Malcolm Fraser in 1983, for example), or retire (Robert Menzies in 1966)[1249]. There is not a lot that can be done about the first of these options (death), and even, arguably, the fourth (dismissal). The third, arising out of a shift in allegiances on the floor of the parliament, is unlikely to be repeated because of stricter party discipline and the presence of few independents or cross-benchers in the House of Representatives. Retirement is a decision rarely made. This leaves the loss of party and electoral support as the two removal mechanisms which are most important to this analysis of prime ministerial power. In Paul Keating's case, he paid insufficient attention to the voters, thinking policy and the inadequacies of the opposition would get him through. And he dominated the Party and cabinet to the extent that there was little resistance, no alternative leader, and no challenge or likelihood of one.

Prime ministerial power resides in those institutions which have an impact on the political management of a prime minister and their ability to maintain the position. It can be found in the caucus, where party colleagues can simply look to an alternative for leadership. It resides in the cabinet and the broader ministry; these people are senior colleagues of the PM and have their own power bases, media profiles and political clout. Power can be found in the bureaucratic and advisory institutions, which have significant policy input and turf to defend. There is power for prime minsters to mine in the parliament; a competent performance is required there to maintain an ascendency over the opposition and continually display leadership credentials. The media is powerful because it reports and comments on the PM and colours how she or he is judged, so must be kept on side. The electorate has the power, periodically at least, to fire or re-hire prime ministers, and public opinion in between times can put pressure on the party room to act against a poorly performing incumbent, so the task of maintaining support needs constant attention.

The cultivation of prime ministerial power is, therefore, an interactionist process between a PM and these institutions which determine, or contribute

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[1249] See Patrick Weller 1985, op cit, p 46.

to, continued tenure and political success. This is an approach well-articulated by Robert Elgie[1250], who maintains a leader's interactions with the institutional environment is the key analytical point for scholars of political leadership. For the purposes of this thesis, the leadership environment comprises prime ministerial institutions like the caucus, cabinet, parliament and media. How the PM, in this case Paul Keating, deals with these alternative power sources goes a long way towards determining how powerful prime ministers are and how much influence others have on the position. What sets this dissertation apart from the available prime ministerial power literature is this emphasis on interactions, and the conclusion that while leaders have the tools for dominance, they can only truly act unilaterally if their colleagues allow them to.

Crudely, we know that prime ministers are powerful when their wishes prevail over alternative views pushed by the other institutions and individuals with which they share power. Prime ministers interact with these institutions, so there is necessarily a relationship and a dialogue between them which provides an opportunity for both sides of the relationship to exercise power. Some of these other power sources – caucus, cabinet, electorate – determine directly whether or not the PM prevails. Others, such as the media, parliament and sources of advice, help or hinder prime ministers in their pursuit of power over these other institutions. How they are utilised impacts on whether or not the prime minister gets her or his way.

As discussed at length from the outset of this dissertation, proponents of the prime ministerial power thesis maintain that PMs are increasingly authoritative in relation to their colleagues and the broader institutions of the political system. Their influence over the caucus, cabinet, and parliament is said to have grown to the point where leadership is more and more individual; indeed some problematically employ the term 'presidential'. The leader is no longer primus inter pares, the argument goes, they are simply primus. Colleagues comprise a decreasingly influential group. The media concentrates almost exclusively on the PM, the campaign load is borne largely

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[1250] Robert Elgie 1995, op cit.

by the leader, and credit or blame for the government's performance rests with its head.

The Paul Keating Prime Ministership has great value as a case study in the evolving debate over the individualisation of prime ministerial power in Australia. The common, simplistic view is that Keating was an authoritative leader, dominating prime ministerial institutions and operating almost as a one-man government, free from the restraint of colleagues and willing and able to announce and develop policy unilaterally. The reality, of course, is more complicated. Any evaluation of the power resources utilised by Prime Minister Keating must necessarily treat each institutional domain separately. How power is exercised in caucus, for example, will differ from how it is exercised in the media. How parliament is used to maximise authority can, in the same way, differ from how the cabinet is navigated.

Paul Keating's relationship with the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party – the caucus – was one marked by prime ministerial dominance and backbench subservience. On few occasions did caucus challenge the PM. They were, on the whole, prepared to defer to their leader, especially after March 1993. The FPLP's one significant power resource – the removal mechanism – was never seriously threatened. This meant the leadership bargain, discussed at length in Chapter Three, was skewed dramatically in favour of the Prime Minister. These two factors; the unwillingness on the part of caucus to consider or threaten to consider an alternative, and their general subservience, meant that Keating was extremely powerful in this domain. His authority went unchecked in the Labor caucus.

A similar story emerges from Chapter Four's analysis of Prime Minister Keating in cabinet, and his relationship with ministers. Cabinet was essentially a rubber stamp for those initiatives preferred by the PM. He surrounded himself after 1993 with a hand-picked ministry who interfered little with Keating's plans. Prime ministerial intervention into policy areas was common in selected areas, whereas those domains of little interest to the PM were left to relevant ministers. Keating could pick and choose from a menu of

portfolios and be certain that any intervention would bring the desired result. He dominated cabinet because it came to be filled with supporters, factional colleagues and acquiescent ministers. If cabinet is the key test of prime ministerial power, then Keating's ability to get his own way in that forum marks him out as an extremely authoritative and dominant leader.

Keating's leadership tenure can also be seen as individually powerful with respect to his ability to govern from the centre, the subject of Chapter Five. In the policy areas Keating deemed important enough to steer himself, decisions were debated and taken in the Prime Minister's Office, with the benefit of the advice from a small coterie of loyal, trusted advisers. Thus the PMO became an extremely powerful institution, perhaps secretive and, at times, inaccessible to others. Decisions taken there effectively became decisions of the Government, such was the Prime Minister's dominance of cabinet and the policy clout accumulated by senior PMO advisers. Again, then, we can mark this domain down as another in which Prime Minister Keating performed authoritatively. His private office afforded him scope for power, and he utilised it as a way of governing from the centre and dominating his Labor Government. The caveat to this, however, is that Australia's federal system and the demands placed on the federal government by the High Court create situations, such as the Mabo case, where governing from the centre is made more difficult by powerful state governments.

The House of Representatives also had an important influence over Prime Minister Keating's stores of authority. There is little doubt he dominated the institution, but this had positive and negative impacts on his stores of prime ministerial power. On the positive side, his skilful use of parliament to motivate colleagues and dominate the opposition and its leaders was important. One cost of his combative approach, however, was that the language and debating style he used was not necessarily appealing in the broader electorate who adjudged his performances perhaps less than prime ministerial. This meant parliament allowed Keating to build authority in the Party room but spend it in the electorate. In this domain, then, the Prime

Minister was individually powerful, but the net effect of his performances was probably a neutral one.

The media relationship was the most problematic of Paul Keating's prime ministerial tenure. It deteriorated throughout, and the relationship became so poor that it could descend into open warfare. The media were effectively banned by Keating in the aftermath of the 1993 election because they had written off his chances for victory. Because prime ministers are covered so prominently by the media and their performance equated with that of their government, the poor Keating-media relationship meant the Government suffered greatly. In the media context, then, we witness the leadership stretch to which Foley refers, as well as a failure to utilise such an important prime ministerial resource. Keating's poor relationship with the mainstream Australian media cost him much power, a problem that his skilful speechmaking and international diplomacy could not reverse.

The media passed on to the Australian voting public the perception that Prime Minister Keating was out of touch with their concerns and aspirations. This fed an already prominent dislike of the PM among the Australian people, as measured by opinion polls which regularly demonstrated dissatisfaction with the leader and an opinion of him as arrogant and inflexible. Keating was also not prepared to play to the 'hollow centre' of the prime ministership; the seemingly superficial but nonetheless important acts which court public opinion and seek support. Even in a campaign sense his remarkable victory in 1993 was based more on a combative and methodical dismantling of Hewson and the GST rather than on a groundswell of public popularity. Thus, in a similar way to the media relationship, Prime Minister Keating's reluctance to pursue a more effective alliance with the Australian people cost him dearly. That he could dominate his Party, cabinet and parliament mattered little to the Australian electorate in 1996. They threw him out regardless, stripping him of any and all prime ministerial power he previously enjoyed.

The analysis of each of these prime ministerial relationships, carried out in some detail in previous chapters and summarised here, points to an

inconsistent picture. In the context of his Government there is little doubt that he was immensely powerful, certainly, as Graham Richardson once opined, the most powerful Labor leader ever[1251]. His dominance of caucus and cabinet was complete, especially after the unexpected 1993 election victory. As Alan Ramsey wrote, in a typically critical but also illustrative article penned in 1994, Keating

> thinks he's Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Marco Polo and Genghis Khan all wrapped in one sleek feline package. Since last March, the power of the emperor is complete, and he now administers it, often creatively, just as often willfully, with all the overtones of the street thug that Keating, beneath all that style and clever language and political brilliance, cannot stop himself from being. It is the instinctive nature of the beast. Politics, at its most basic, is the art of what you can get away with, and Keating, when he sets his mind to it, behaves as though he thinks he can get away with pretty much anything - in his party, in his Government, in the Parliament and out there in the electorate[1252].

The available evidence supports this conclusion that Keating was a leader unhindered by caucus or cabinet. He was allowed to announce policy without consulting colleagues, and could then drive it through cabinet with little fear of defeat. He garnered for himself, in 1993, the authority to select a ministry that would have been different if it had been chosen by caucus and the factions, as was previous practice. It is these observations that make the case for Keating as an individually powerful Australian Prime Minister.

We can also observe Foley's leadership stretch in the prime ministerial tenure of Paul Keating, though in a public and media context this advantage went largely unutilised. Another Ramsey article makes the point:

> everybody, but everybody, makes the Prime Minister the political focus of all that goes on in the Government (unless one of his ministers gets into trouble). For instance, on the two days a week (Mondays and Thursdays) that Keating goes to Question Time in Parliament, you get a full House. The public galleries are full, with people still queuing outside; the gallery for the press is full; all the MPs on both sides are there. Everyone goes to see Keating . They're there to watch him, to bait him, to support him, or to report him. Nobody else really, just him.... Keating attracts all the focus and all the pressure. Radio talkback hosts can queue for a year to have him on their program. They have scant interest in others. Neither do the

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[1251] Graham Richardson, quoted in *Labor in Power* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1993).

[1252] Alan Ramsey, 'Emperor Paul Naked But For Noise', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1994, p 33.

> TV current affairs programs. ... The others behind him are mostly grey faces, mere talking heads nobody is interested in[1253].

That Keating was the sole focus of media and public attention afforded opportunities for him to sell his big picture, but it also had costs for the Government when the Prime Minister fell out of favour with the media and the electorate.

Significant lessons for Australian prime ministerial leadership arise out of the Keating prime ministership and this dissertation's analysis of the period and reliance on the interactionist model. The Keating experience tells us that the media and the electorate are two powerful domains which must be carefully nurtured, for both are willing and able to turn on a prime minister, with dire consequences. The second lesson is that there are two sides to prime ministerial dominance of colleagues in the caucus and cabinet. Personal style accounts for some of this ability to dominate, but the leadership bargain and the removal mechanism means party colleagues must also cede some of their power to allow room for prime ministerial manoeuvre. In this respect, Australian prime ministers are only ever as powerful as the party allows them to be. That Keating so dominated the Labor Party is a reflection of the fact that caucus never seemed willing to replace him, and there was never a viable threat that this would occur. Unhindered, it is not surprising that he often acted unilaterally.

An additional lesson is provided by a comparison of the Keating, Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke prime ministerships, which demonstrates that more than one path to dominance is available to an Australian Prime Minister. Fraser, Patrick Weller tells us, was an authoritative party leader and PM who relied on a breadth of information and a dogged determination to be across all aspects of his Government's activities. He worked long hours, sought much advice, and manipulated the cabinet system through extensive consultation, persuasion and exhaustively long meetings. He was an uncomfortable parliamentarian and a steady media performer.

[1253] Alan Ramsey, 'Hate the Man, But Love to Watch Him', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April

Bob Hawke, too, offers a valuable and marked distinction from the Keating experience. Hawke was an effective cabinet chair who gave his talented ministers much latitude and offered the Government a popular leader, detached from policy making and heavily reliant on others. He was an impressive public figure who enjoyed the electoral aspect of the job and employed a consensus style of leadership. Hawke was a talented administrator who made sure he was across every brief. Importantly, he maintained a much analysed love affair with the Australian people which saw him leave office having won four consecutive elections and losing none, a remarkable feat in the contemporary Australian political climate.

Paul Keating's approach to the position was vastly different from both Fraser's and Hawke's. He injected himself into only those policy areas which interested him, and dominated them, but left the minutiae of other Government initiatives to his other ministers. He rarely consulted, instead trusting a select few advisers in his office, the Department, and former advisers in the private sector. He conserved his energy and refused to spread himself too thinly over all of the issues. He dominated parliament with his rhetorical power, and caucus and cabinet with intellectual force and a skilful employment of patronage. In short, though Fraser, Hawke and Keating can all be described as dominant prime ministers, their paths to prime ministerial power differed greatly.

At the outset of this thesis one of the stated objectives was to account for these differences in experiences from Fraser to Keating. Party difference was offered as one potential avenue for diversion, but the analysis contained in Chapter Three of this thesis would make the case that there is little difference, in relation to prime ministerial power, between the ALP and Fraser's Liberals. Indeed Labor under Keating was even more subservient to the leader; democratic traditions and external policy making and control were not factors in his leadership. The structures of power in the ALP were largely ignored by Keating once he appeared safe from challenge. The removal mechanism is again key here. Malcolm Fraser had to contend with an alternative leadership

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1995, p 39.

aspirant with some support – Andrew Peacock – whereas Keating did not. This meant, somewhat paradoxically, that Fraser was given less leeway from his party room than Keating was. Party difference was irrelevant; the leadership bargain and the removal mechanism remained primarily important.

This leaves personal style as the final explanatory difference between how the opportunities of leadership stretch and for institutional dominance were utilised by recent leaders. Because there is more than one path to prime ministerial power, the attributes of the leader and the strategic decisions they make about how to maximise their power are paramount. For example, Keating had the psychological and rhetorical ability to use parliament more effectively than Fraser or Hawke could. Fraser and Hawke were more prepared to consult colleagues, and tolerated more access from backbenchers. Keating was a more combative, street-fighting variety of leader. Hawke's electoral appeal dwarfed that of his predecessor and successor. The differences abound, but all exercised an extraordinary dominance over their respective governments. The Keating tenure confirms the trend towards individual leadership, but throws up a combination of new and interesting factors impacting on prime ministerial power.

Prime Minister Keating was colossally dominant over the Labor caucus and cabinet but this could not ensure his survival once judged the second time by the Australian electorate. His colleagues were subservient and submissive, but the electorate was, after an early reprieve in 1993, not. There are numerous reasons for Keating and Labor's loss in 1996, among them the personal style and unpopularity of the Prime Minister and the weight of long term incumbency. Whatever the reason for the landslide defeat, however, that Keating was beaten by Howard is evidence that prime ministerial power springs first from the voting public. The demos, in Don Watson's words, 'held the gun', aimed it at their PM and his Party, and fired.

No prime minister operates free from constraint because the job is one that exists on the basis of party and electoral support. They fight on two fronts, though Keating only maintained a dominant ascendency over one. Prime

ministers who don't retire or die, or who aren't dismissed, are subject to two significant and periodically unsheathed removal mechanisms; the electorate and the party room. The first relies on the tides of public opinion and support, the second on a leadership bargain which trades the prospects of electoral success for security of tenure.

Thus prime ministers are only as powerful as they are allowed to be. Their colleagues determine whether or not they continue to lead the party, and the electorate decides whether or not they continue to lead a government. This is the key point about prime ministerial power, and the primary lesson of this dissertation. Because they are subject to these constraints they can never be completely dominant; their job is too reliant on the support of others. The leadership bargain struck with caucus can remain intact when a skilful and/or dominant prime minister cultivates the relationship or when there is little chance of an alternative wresting the leadership from the PM. When there is an alternative, or when the relationship breaks down, so too does the bargain. Electorally, a poor relationship with the voting public has similarly dire consequences for a prime minister not ready to relinquish power.

Within the constraints provided by the removal mechanisms of party and public, Australian prime ministers can nonetheless be individually powerful or presidential. Because of the constraints, this power can never be complete, but as the Paul Keating Prime Ministership demonstrates, a leader can nonetheless dominate the government. That Keating could announce policies unilaterally, hand pick his cabinet, ride roughshod over caucus and cabinet misgivings over policy, and dominate Labor's two election campaigns is evidence enough that the office has become an individualised one. There is scope for the wielding of massive power, that Keating drew upon throughout the course of his Prime Ministership. His tenure demonstrates both the possibilities of the office, and the electoral limits of prime ministerial power.

One contributor to the debate over prime ministerial power describes the office as a rubber band, which can stretch to accommodate a dominant prime

minister but contracts for a more submissive one[1254]. This is only partly an apt description of the office. It is true, from the evidence provided here and in Patrick Weller's study of Malcolm Fraser, that personal style and ability determines how powerful a prime minister is, and how they utilise the powers of the office to dominate the government. An active prime minister clearly stretches the rubber band. But the flaw in this analysis is its failure to recognise that the band never returns back to the old conception. Australian prime ministers will never again be like the chairpersons of company boards. They will never again be primus inter pares. The evolution of the office has taken on a trajectory which means the scope for the individual exercise of prime ministerial power is greater as time goes on. The speed of these developments depends on personal style – and Fraser and Keating both served to accelerate the trend – but the expectations on successive prime ministers and the demands of leadership stretch create a situation where the traditional prime ministership and cabinet government are but things of the past.

This thesis has argued that prime ministers are not and will never be like presidents because their colleagues determine their ongoing tenure. When these colleagues are compliant or subservient, as was the case under Prime Minister Keating, the prime minister is provided scope for dominant, even dictatorial, leadership encumbered only by the electoral process. Because leadership is interactional it depends on the strategy and talents of the leader but also, importantly in democratic polities like Australia, on the willingness of others to be led.

[1254] George Jones 1991, op cit.

Interviews

John Button	Senator for Victoria 1974-1993 and Minister for Industry in the Keating Government (1991-1993).
Neal Blewett	Member for Bonython 1977-1994 and Minister for Social Security in the Keating Government (1991-1993).
Rod Cameron	Managing Director, Australian National Opinion Polls, and former Labor pollster.
Shaun Carney	*Age* journalist.
Bruce Chapman	Policy adviser to Paul Keating PM.
Bruce Childs	Senator for New South Wales 1981-1997 and Convenor of the Left faction in the Keating Government.
Anthony Chisholm	National Campaign Organiser, Australian Labor Party.
Helen Creed	National President, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union since 1995.
Megan Dixon-Child	Media and Communications advisor, ALP National Secretariat, and former ABC journalist.
Meredith Edwards	Former Deputy Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet during the Keating Government.

Michael Fullilove	Policy adviser to Paul Keating PM.
Tim Gartrell	National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party and former ministerial adviser in the Keating Government.
Michael Gordon	*Age* journalist and Keating biographer.
Ian Henderson	Australian Labor Party Official during the Keating Government (1991-1994).
John Hewson	Leader of the Opposition 1990-1994.
Bob Hogg	National Secretary, Australian Labor Party 1988-1993.
Brian Howe	Member for Batman 1977-1996, Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services and Deputy Prime Minister in the Keating Government (1991-1995).
David Jull	Member for Fadden since 1984.
Mike Kaiser	ALP Assistant National Secretary and former Queensland State Secretary.
Michael Keating	Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 1992-1996.
Paul Keating	Prime Minister of Australia 1991-1996.
Paul Kelly	*Australian* journalist and author.

John Kerin	Member for Werriwa 1978-1993 and Minister for Trade in the Keating Government (1991-1993).
Margo Kingston	*Sydney Morning Herald* journalist.
Geoff Kitney	*Sydney Morning Herald* journalist.
Mark Latham	Leader of the Opposition since 2003 and Member for Werriwa since 1994.
Michael Lavarch	Member for Dickson 1990-1996 and Attorney-General in the Keating Government (1993-1996).
Glenn Milne	*Channel Seven* and *Australian* journalist.
John O'Callaghan	Former adviser to Kim Beazley MP.
Linus Power	National Organiser, Australian Labor Party.
Graham Richardson	Senator for New South Wales 1983-1994, Minister for Transport and Communications (1991-1992) and Minister for Health (1993-1994) in the Keating Government.
Don Russell	Adviser to Paul Keating PM.
Mark Ryan	Adviser to Paul Keating PM.
Les Scott	Member for Oxley 1988-1996.
Jim Snow	Member for Eden-Monaro 1983-1996.
Mike Steketee	*Sydney Morning Herald* journalist.

Greg Turnbull

Press secretary to Paul Keating PM.

Geoff Walsh

Former National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party and adviser to Bob Hawke PM and Paul Keating PM.

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Appendix One: The Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
1991-1996

FPLP - First Keating Government December 1991 to March 1993	
Aulich, Terrence Gordon	Senator for Tasmania
Baldwin, Hon Peter Jeremy	MP for Sydney (NSW)
Beahan, Michael Eamon	Senator for Western Australia
Beazley, Hon Kim Christian	MP for Swan (WA)
Beddall, Hon Peter David	MP for Rankin (QLD)
Bevis, Archibald Ronald	MP for Brisbane (QLD)
Bilney, Hon Gordon Neil	MP for Kingston (SA)
Blewett, Hon Neal	MP for Bonython (SA)
Bolkus, Hon Nick	Senator for South Australia
Brereton, Hon Laurence John	MP for Kingsford Smith (NSW)
Brown, Hon Robert James	MP for Charlton (NSW)
Burns, Bryant Robert	Senator for Queensland
Button, Hon John Norman	Senator for Victoria
Campbell, Graeme	MP for Kalgoorlie (WA)
Catley, Dr Robert	MP for Adelaide (SA)
Charlesworth, Dr Richard Ian	MP for Perth (WA)
Childs, Bruce Kenneth	Senator for New South Wales
Coates, John	Senator for Tasmania
Collins, Robert Lindsay	Senator for the Northern Territory
Colston, Malcolm Arthur	Senator for Queensland
Cook, Hon Peter Francis Salmon	Senator for Western Australia
Cooney, Bernard Cornelius	Senator for Victoria
Courtice, Brian William	MP for Hinkler (QLD)
Crawford, Mary Catherine	MP for Forde (QLD)
Crean, Hon Simon Findlay	MP for Hotham (VIC)
Crosio, Hon Janice Ann, MBE	MP for Prospect (NSW)
Crowley, Rosemary Anne	Senator for South Australia
Darling, Elaine Elizabeth	MP for Lilley (QLD)
Dawkins, Hon John Sydney	MP for Fremantle (WA)
Devereux, John Robert	Senator for Tasmania
Dubois, Stephen Cairfield	MP for St George (NSW)
Duffy, Hon Michael John	MP for Holt (VIC)
Duncan, Hon Peter	MP for Makin (SA)
Edwards, Ronald Frederick	MP for Stirling (WA)
Elliott, Robert Paul	MP for Parramatta (NSW)
Evans, Hon Gareth John, QC	Senator for Victoria
Fatin, Hon Wendy Frances	MP for Brand (WA)
Faulkner, John Phillip	Senator for New South Wales
Ferguson, Laurie Donald Thomas	MP for Reid (NSW)
Fitzgibbon, Eric John	MP for Hunter (NSW)
Foreman, Dominic John	Senator for South Australia

Free, Ross Vincent	MP for Lindsay (NSW)
Gayler, John	MP for Leichhardt (QLD)
Gear, George	MP for Canning (WA)
Gibson, Garrie David	MP for Moreton (QLD)
Giles, Patricia Jessie	Senator for Western Australia
Gorman, Russell Neville Joseph	MP for Greenway (NSW)
Grace, Edward Laurence	MP for Fowler (NSW)
Griffiths, Hon Alan Gordon	MP for Maribyrnong (VIC)
Hand, Hon Gerard Leslie	MP for Melbourne (VIC)
Hawke, Hon Robert James Lee, AC	MP for Wills (VIC) *Resigned 20 February 1992, seat lost to Independent (Cleary) 11 April 1992*
Holding, Hon Allan Clyde	MP for Melbourne Ports (VIC)
Hollis, Colin	MP for Throsby (NSW)
Howe, Hon Brian Leslie	MP for Batman (VIC)
Hulls, Rob Justin	MP for Kennedy (QLD)
Humphreys, Hon Benjamin Charles	MP for Griffith (QLD)
Jakobsen, Carolyn Anne	MP for Cowan (WA)
Jenkins, Henry Alfred	MP for Scullin (VIC)
Johns, Gary Thomas	MP for Petrie (QLD)
Jones, Gerry Norman	Senator for Queensland
Jones, Hon Barry Owen	MP for Lalor (VIC)
Keating, Hon Paul John	MP for Blaxland (NSW)
Kelly, Hon Roslyn Joan	MP for Canberra (ACT)
Kerin, Hon John Charles	MP for Werriwa (NSW)
Kerr, Duncan James	MP for Denison (TAS)
Langmore, John Vance	MP for Fraser (ACT)
Lavarch, Michael Hugh	MP for Fisher (QLD)
Lee, Michael John	MP for Dobell (NSW)
Lindsay, Eamon John, RFD	MP for Herbert (QLD)
Maguire, Graham Ross	Senator for South Australia
Martin, Stephen Paul	MP for Macarthur (NSW)
McHugh, Jeannette	MP for Phillip (NSW)
McKiernan, James Philip	Senator for Western Australia
McLeay, Hon Leo Boyce	MP for Grayndler (NSW)
McMullan, Hon Robert Francis	Senator for the Australian Capital Territory
Melham, Daryl	MP for Banks (NSW)
Morris, Allan Agapitos	MP for Newcastle (NSW)
Morris, Hon Peter Frederick	MP for Shortland (NSW)
Newell, Neville Joseph	MP for Richmond (NSW)
O'Keefe, Neil Patrick	MP for Burke (VIC)
O'Neil, Lloyd Reginald Terrence	MP for Grey (SA)
Price, Leo Roger Spurway	MP for Chifley (NSW)
Punch, Hon Gary Francis	MP for Barton (NSW)
Ray, Hon Robert Francis	Senator for Victoria
Reynolds, Hon Margaret	Senator for Queensland
Richardson, Hon Graham Frederick	Senator for New South Wales
Sawford, Rodney Weston	MP for Port Adelaide (SA)

Schacht, Christopher Cleland	Senator for South Australia
Scholes, Hon Gordon Glen Denton	MP for Corio (VIC)
Sciacca, Hon Con	MP for Bowman (QLD)
Scott, John Lyden	MP for Hindmarsh (SA)
Scott, Leslie James	MP for Oxley (QLD)
Sibraa, Hon Kerry Walter	Senator for New South Wales
Simmons, Hon David William	MP for Calare (NSW)
Snow, James Henry	MP for Eden-Monaro (NSW)
Snowdon, Hon Warren Edward	MP for Northern Territory (NT)
Staples, Hon Peter Richard	MP for Jagajaga (VIC)
Tate, Hon Michael Carter	Senator for Tasmania
Theophanous, Dr Andrew Charles	MP for Calwell (VIC)
Tickner, Hon Robert Edward	MP for Hughes (NSW)
Walker, Francis John, QC	MP for Robertson (NSW)
Walsh, Hon Peter Alexander	Senator for Western Australia
West, Hon Stewart John	MP for Cunningham (NSW)
Willis, Hon Ralph	MP for Gellibrand (VIC)
Woods, Harry Francis	MP for Page (NSW)
Wright, Keith Webb	MP for Capricornia (QLD)
Zakharov, Alice Olive	Senator for Victoria

Source: Hansard.

FPLP - Second Keating Government March 1993 to March 1996	
Adams, Hon Godfrey Harry	MP for Lyons (TAS)
Baldwin, Hon Peter Jeremy	MP for Sydney (NSW)
Beahan, Michael Eamon	Senator for Western Australia
Beazley, Hon Kim Christian	MP for Swan (WA)
Beddall, Hon Peter David	MP for Rankin (QLD)
Bevis, Archibald Ronald	MP for Brisbane (QLD)
Bilney, Hon Gordon Neil	MP for Kingston (SA)
Blewett, Hon Neal	MP for Bonython (SA) *Resigned 11 February 1994, replaced by M Evans 19 March 1994*
Bolkus, Hon Nick	Senator for South Australia
Brereton, Hon Laurence John	MP for Kingsford Smith (NSW)
Brown, Hon Robert James	MP for Charlton (NSW)
Burns, Bryant Robert	Senator for Queensland
Campbell, Graeme	MP for Kalgoorlie (WA) *Expelled from FPLP November 1995*
Carr, Kim John	Senator for Victoria
Childs, Bruce Kenneth	Senator for New South Wales
Chynoweth, Robert Leslie	MP for Dunkley (VIC)
Cleeland, Peter Robert	MP for McEwen (VIC)
Coates, John	Senator for Tasmania

Collins, Hon Robert Lindsay	Senator for the Northern Territory
Collins, Jacinta Mary Ann	Senator for Victoria *Replaced Zakharov 3 May 1995*
Colston, Malcolm Arthur	Senator for Queensland
Cook, Hon Peter Francis Salmon	Senator for Western Australia
Cooney, Bernard Cornelius	Senator for Victoria
Crawford, Mary Catherine	MP for Forde (QLD)
Crean, Hon Simon Findlay	MP for Hotham (VIC)
Crosio, Hon Janice Ann, MBE	MP for Prospect (NSW)
Crowley, Hon Rosemary Anne	Senator for South Australia
Cunningham, Barry Thomas	MP for McMillan (VIC)
Dawkins, Hon John Sydney	MP for Fremantle (WA) *Resigned 4 February 1994, replaced by Lawrence 12 March 1994*
Deahm, Maggie	MP for Macquarie (NSW)
Denman, Kay Janet	Senator for Tasmania *Replaced Tate 24 August 1993*
Devereux, John Robert	Senator for Tasmania
Dodd, Peter George	MP for Leichhardt (QLD)
Duffy, Hon Michael John	MP for Holt (VIC)
Duncan, Hon Peter	MP for Makin (SA)
Easson, Mary	MP for Lowe (NSW)
Elliott, Robert Paul	MP for Parramatta (NSW)
Evans, Christopher Vaughan	Senator for Western Australia
Evans, Hon Gareth John, QC	Senator for Victoria *Resigned 6 February 1996 (entered HoR at 1996 election), replaced in Senate by Conroy after 1996 election*
Evans, Martyn John	MP for Bonython *Replaced Blewett 19 March 1994*
Fatin, Hon Wendy Frances	MP for Brand (WA)
Faulkner, Hon John Phillip	Senator for New South Wales
Ferguson, Laurie Donald Thomas	MP for Reid (NSW)
Fitzgibbon, Eric John	MP for Hunter (NSW)
Foreman, Dominic John	Senator for South Australia
Forshaw, Michael George	Senator for New South Wales *Replaced Graham Richardson 10 May 1994*
Free, Ross Vincent	MP for Lindsay (NSW)
Gayler, John	MP for Leichhardt (QLD)
Gear, Hon George	MP for Canning (WA)
Gibson, Garrie David	MP for Moreton (QLD)
Gorman, Russell Neville Joseph	MP for Greenway (NSW)
Grace, Edward Laurence	MP for Fowler (NSW)
Griffin, Alan Peter	MP for Corinella (VIC)
Griffiths, Hon Alan Gordon	MP for Maribyrnong (VIC)
Haviland, Christopher Douglas	MP for Macarthur (NSW)
Henzell, Marjorie Madeline	MP for Capricornia (QLD)
Holding, Hon Allan Clyde	MP for Melbourne Ports (VIC)

Hollis, Colin	MP for Throsby (NSW)
Horne, Robert Hodges	MP fort Paterson (NSW)
Howe, Hon Brian Leslie	MP for Batman (VIC)
Humphreys, Hon Benjamin Charles	MP for Griffith (QLD)
Jenkins, Henry Alfred	MP for Scullin (VIC)
Johns, Gary Thomas	MP for Petrie (QLD)
Jones, Gerry Norman	Senator for Queensland
Jones, Hon Barry Owen	MP for Lalor (VIC)
Keating, Hon Paul John	MP for Blaxland (NSW)
Kelly, Hon Roslyn Joan	MP for Canberra (ACT) *Resigned 30 January 1995, seat lost to Liberal Party (Smyth) 25 March 1995*
Kerin, Hon John Charles	MP for Werriwa (NSW) *Resigned 22 December 1993, replaced by Latham 29 January 1994*
Kerr, Hon Duncan James	MP for Denison (TAS)
Knott, Peter John	MP for Gilmore (NSW)
Langmore, John Vance	MP for Fraser (ACT)
Latham, Mark	MP for Werriwa *Replaced Kerin 29 January 1994*
Lavarch, Michael Hugh	MP for Dickson (QLD)
Lawrence, Carmen	MP for Fremantle *Replaced Dawkins 12 March 1994*
Lee, Michael John	MP for Dobell (NSW)
Lindsay, Eamon John, RFD	MP for Herbert (QLD)
Loosley, Stephen	Senator for New South Wales
McHugh, Jeannette	MP for Grayndler (NSW)
McKiernan, James Philip	Senator for Western Australia
McLeay, Hon Leo Boyce	MP for Watson (NSW)
Martin, Hon Stephen Paul	MP for Cunningham (NSW)
McMullan, Hon Robert Francis	Senator for the Australian Capital Territory
Melham, Daryl	MP for Banks (NSW)
Morris, Allan Agapitos	MP for Newcastle (NSW)
Morris, Hon Peter Frederick	MP for Shortland (NSW)
Murphy, Shayne Michael	Senator for Tasmania
Neal, Belinda Jane	Senator for New South Wales *Replaced Sibraa 8 March 1994*
Newell, Neville Joseph	MP for Richmond (NSW)
O'Connor, Gavan Michael	MP for Corio (VIC)
O'Keefe, Neil Patrick	MP for Burke (VIC)
Price, Hon Leo Roger Spurway	MP for Chifley (NSW)
Punch, Hon Gary Francis	MP for Barton (NSW)
Quick, Harry Vernon	MP for Franklin (TAS)
Ray, Hon Robert Francis	Senator for Victoria
Reynolds, Hon Margaret	Senator for Queensland
Richardson, Hon Graham Frederick	Senator for New South Wales *Resigned 25 March 1994, replaced by Forshaw 10 May 1994*

Sawford, Rodney Weston	MP for Port Adelaide (SA)
Schacht, Christopher Cleland	Senator for South Australia
Sciacca, Hon Con	MP for Bowman (QLD)
Scott, Leslie James	MP for Oxley (QLD)
Sherry, Hon Nicholas John	Senator for Tasmania
Sibraa, Hon Kerry Walter	Senator for New South Wales *Resigned 1 February 1994, replaced by Neal 8 March 1994*
Simmons, Hon David William	MP for Calare (NSW)
Smith, Silvia Joy	MP for Bass (TAS)
Smith, Stephen Francis	MP for Perth (WA)
Snow, James Henry	MP for Eden-Monaro (NSW)
Snowdon, Hon Warren Edward	MP for Northern Territory (NT)
Staples, Hon Peter Richard	MP for Jagajaga (VIC)
Swan, Wayne Maxwell	MP for Lilley (QLD)
Tanner, Lindsay James	MP for Melbourne (VIC)
Tate, Hon Michael Carter	Senator for Tasmania *Resigned 5 July 1993, replaced by Denman 24 August 1993*
Theophanous, Dr Andrew Charles	MP for Calwell (VIC)
Tickner, Hon Robert Edward	MP for Hughes (NSW)
Walker, Hon Francis John, QC	MP for Robertson (NSW)
West, Suzanne Margaret	Senator for New South Wales
Willis, Hon Ralph	MP for Gellibrand (VIC)
Woods, Harry Francis	MP for Page (NSW)
Wright, Keith Webb	MP for Capricornia (QLD)
Zakharov, Alice Olive	Senator for Victoria *Died 6 March 1995, replaced by J Collins 3 May 1995*

Source: Hansard.

Appendix Two: The Keating Ministries

Ministry - First Keating Government December 1991 to March 1993	
Minister	Portfolio
Cabinet	
PJ Keating	Prime Minister
BL Howe	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health, Housing and Community Services
JN Button	Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce
GJ Evans	Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
JS Dawkins	Treasurer
R Willis	Minister for Finance
MJ Duffy	Attorney-General
KC Beazley	Minister for Employment, Education and Training
N Blewett	Minister for Social Security
GF Richardson	Minister for Transport and Communications (until 18.5.1992)
RL Collins	Minister for Northern Australia and Shipping and Aviation (until 27.5.92), Minister for Transport and Communications (from 27.5.1992)
RF Ray	Minister for Defence
GL Hand	Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
RJ Kelly	Minister for the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories
PFS Cook	Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Shipping and Aviation Support (from 27.5.92)
N Bolkus	Minister for Administrative Services
SF Crean	Minister for Primary Industries and Energy
AG Griffiths	Minister for Tourism and Minister for Resources
BC Humphreys	Minister for Northern Australia (from 27.5.92) and Veteran's Affairs
Other Ministers	
PR Staples	Minister for Aged, Family and Health Services
RV Free	Minister for Science and Technology
DP Beddall	Minister for Small Business, Construction and Customs
JC Kerin	Minister for Trade and Overseas Development

MC Tate	Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs (until 27.5.92), Minister for Justice (from 27.5.92)
J McHugh	Minister for Consumer Affairs (from 27.5.92)
PJ Baldwin	Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services
RE Tickner	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
DW Simmons	Minister for Family Support and Minister for Local Government
RJ Brown	Minister for Land Transport
GN Bilney	Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
WF Fatin	Minister for the Arts and Territories

Ministry - First Keating Government March 1993 to March 1996	
Minister	Portfolio
Cabinet	
PJ Keating	Prime Minister
BL Howe	Deputy Prime Minister (until 20.6.95), Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Services (until 23.12.93), Minister for Housing, Local Government and Human Services (23.12.93 until 25.3.94), Minister for Housing and Regional Development (from 25.3.94)
KC Beazley	Minister for Employment Education and Training (until 23.12.93), Minister for Finance (from 23.12.93), Deputy Prime Minister (from 20.6.95)
GF Richardson	Minister for Health (until 25.3.94), Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories (1.3.94 - 25.3.94)
CM Lawrence	Minister for Health (from 25.3.94)
GJ Evans	Minister for Foreign Affairs
PFS Cook	Minister for Trade (until 30.1.94). Minister for Science, Technology and Regional Development (30.1.94 – 25.3.94), Minister for Industry, Science and Technology (from 25.3.94)
RF McMullan	Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services (until 30.1.94), Minister for Administrative Services (30.1.94 – 25.3.94), Minister for Trade (from 30.1.94)

RF Ray	Minister for Defence
JS Dawkins	Treasurer (until 23.12.93)
R Willis	Minister for Finance (until 23.12.93), Treasurer (from 23.12.93)
SF Crean	Minister for Primary Industries and Energy (until 23.12.93), Minister for Education, Employment and Training (from 23.12.93)
RJ Kelly	Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories (until 1.3.94)
JP Faulkner	Minister for Veteran's Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel (until 25.3.94), Minister for Sport and Territories (1.3.94 – 25.3.94), Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories (from 25.3.94)
N Bolkus	Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
RL Collins	Minister for Transport and Communications (until 23.12.94), Minister for Primary Industries and Energy (from 23.12.93)
AG Griffiths	Minister for Science, Technology and Regional Development (until 23.1.94)
LJ Brereton	Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Transport (from 23.12.93)
MJ Lee	Minister for Resources (to 23.12.93). Minister for Communications (23.12.93 – 30.1.94), Minister for Communications and the Arts (from 30.1.94), Minister for Tourism
PJ Baldwin	Minister for Social Security
MH Lavarch	Attorney-General (from 27.4.93)
Other Ministers	
FJ Walker	Special Minister of State (to 25.3.94), Minister for Administrative Services (from 25.3.94)
GT Johns	Special Minister of State (from 25.3.94)
RE Tickner	Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
RA Crowley	Minister for Family Services
CA Sciacca	Minister for Veteran's Affairs (from 25.3.94)
GN Bilney	Minister for Development Cooperation and Pacific Island Affairs
GF Punch	Minister for Defence Science and Personnel (from 25.3.94)
RV Free	Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training
DP Beddall	Minister for Communications (until

	23.12.93), Minister for Resources (from 23.12.93)
CC Schacht	Minister for Science and Small Business (until 25.3.94), Minister for Small Business, Customs and Construction (from 25.3.94)
DJC Kerr	Attorney-General (1.4.93 – 27.4.93), Minister for Justice
J McHugh	Minister for Consumer Affairs

Appendix Three: Keating Cabinet Committees

Composition of Cabinet Committees First Keating Government December 1991 to March 1993[1255]	
Name[1256]	Members[1257]
Expenditure Review	Keating (chair), Howe, Button, Evans, Dawkins, Willis, Beazley, Blewett, Brereton, Crean, Baldwin
Parliamentary Business	Keating (chair), Howe, Button, Evans, Duffy, Beazley, Blewett, Ray, Griffiths, Collins, Free, McMullan, Brereton, Lavarch, Faulkner, Walker
Legislation	Keating (chair), Evans, Duffy, Griffiths, Tate, Simmons, Tickner, Free, McMullan, Brereton
Social Justice (Became Social Policy)	Keating (chair), Howe, Dawkins, Willis, Blewett, Hand, Cook, Crean, Tate, Staples, Simmons, Humphreys, Baldwin, Fatin, Tickner, McHugh, Snowdon, Beazley, Richardson
Revenue	Keating (chair), Howe, Button, Evans, Dawkins
Structural Adjustment (Became Structural Adjustment and Trade)	Keating (chair), Howe, Button, Evans, Dawkins, Willis, Beazley, Kelly, Cook, Crean, Griffiths, Collins, Kerin, Beddall, Bilney, Free, Lee
Sustainable Development	Keating (chair), Howe, Button, Dawkins, Willis, Kelly, Bolkus, Crean, Griffiths, Collins, Kerin, Brown, Free, Brereton
Security	Keating (chair), Evans, Beazley, Duffy, Ray, Kerin, Lavarch
General Policy	Keating (chair), Willis, Kelly, Bolkus, McMullan, Brereton, Lavarch, Lee

Sources: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Annual Reports 1991-1996.

[1255] Note that this information was only provided for the first Keating Government. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet ceased publishing this information in their Annual Report in 1993-94. This data remains illustrative because it shows that the Prime Minister chaired each committee.

[1256] Note that this list is composed of committees that met at any time during the first Keating Government.

[1257] Note that this list is composed of all ministers and parliamentary secretaries who were members of the listed committee at any time during the first Keating Government.

Appendix Four: International Visits

21-26 April 1992	Indonesia and Papua New Guinea
7-10 July 1992	Honiara (South Pacific Forum)
20-27 September 1992	Japan, Singapore and Cambodia
20-27 June 1993	Republic of Korea and China
8-11 August 1993	Nauru (South Pacific Forum)
11-26 September 1993	United States of America, United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Monaco
20-28 October 1993	Cyprus (CHOGM) and Indonesia
17-23 November 1993	United States of America
5-13 April 1994	Laos, Thailand and Vietnam
2-12 June 1994	United Kingdom, France and Belgium
27-29 June 1994	Indonesia
4-7 September 1994	Japan
13-16 November 1994	Indonesia (APEC)
4-15 March 1995	Singapore, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands
24-28 May 1995	Japan
12-18 September 1995	Papua New Guinea (South Pacific Forum) and Indonesia
9-13 November 1995	New Zealand (CHOGM)
16-21 November 1995	Japan (APEC)
10-13 December 1995	Israel (State Funeral)
17-19 December 1995	Indonesia (Security Agreement)
15-18 January 1996	Malaysia and Singapore

Sources: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Annual Reports 1991-1996.