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PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P. J. KEATING MP

DEFAMATION ACTION AGAINST SENATOR BAUME

My solicitors yesterday commenced proceedings for defamation against Senator Michael Baume.

A statement of claim lodged with the NSW Supreme Court registry sets out the basis for this action.

For more than eight months, Senator Baume has in an organised way raised untrue allegations against me in the Senate under Parliamentary privilege.

Denied such privilege over the New Year period, in a radio interview in Melbourne Senator Baume falsely accused me of putting my personal financial interests ahead of the interests of the nation when I delivered the One Nation statement in February last year.

Senator Baume accused me of introducing a development allowance scheme in the One Nation package – after I had made a private investment – so as to obtain substantial tax benefits for a company in which I have an interest. Senator Baume stated as a matter of fact that a company in which I have a purely financial interest applied for such benefits.

This is untrue and totally without foundation. No such application was ever proposed or made.

No more serious allegation can be made of a Prime Minister than that he broke the obligations of his office and introduced a policy so as to obtain for himself a private financial benefit.

In a weak public defence of his actions today, Senator Baume is reported to have said: "I think it's in the Australian public's best interests to know what the facts are."

Senator Baume has made defamatory allegations about me without any basis in fact.

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The making of defamatory allegations by any person against another in public life does not of itself render such allegations to be matters of public interest.

Statements which are untrue, without basis, or which are defamatory are not removed from the reach of the law simply because they are said of and about a person in public life.

CANBERRA
January 22, 1993