



91/93

PRIME MINISTER

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

**VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND,
FRANCE AND MONACO**

I am pleased to announce that arrangements have been made for me to visit the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and Monaco from 11 to 24 September.

My visit to Washington will provide a valuable opportunity to reaffirm with the Clinton Administration and Congressional leaders the vitality and relevance of the Australia-United States relationship during a period of great fluidity in international relations. Fundamental Australian interests are engaged in the defence alliance, strong economic ties and processes of policy consultation we enjoy with the United States. Australia welcomes recent public statements by President Clinton about US determination to stay engaged strategically in the Asia-Pacific region and the strong support he has given to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process. I look forward to, in particular, exchanging views with President Clinton on the informal meeting of APEC leaders he proposes to host in Seattle in November this year.

The United States is Australia's second largest export market (\$5.1 billion in 1992) and largest source of imports (\$12.4 billion). It is also the largest source of foreign investment in Australia and the most important destination for Australian direct investment abroad.

Following a two-day program in Washington, I will visit New York where I shall be meeting with UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali to discuss the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era and Australia's participation in UN activities.

In London, I expect to have extensive discussions with Prime Minister Major on a range of bilateral and international issues of importance to both countries. The visit will provide an opportunity to underline the Australian Government's commitment to maintaining a warm and cooperative relationship with Britain at a time when the external policies of both countries are increasingly oriented towards their respective regions, and at a time when there is increasing interest in proposals to amend our constitutional arrangements so as to allow us to have an Australian head of state.

Britain remains one of Australia's most important economic partners. It is Australia's eighth largest export market (\$2.3 billion in 1992) and third largest source of imports (\$3.3 billion). Britain is also our third largest source of foreign investment and the second most important destination for Australian direct investment abroad.

Following an official program in London, I shall visit Balmoral Castle in Scotland for a private meeting with Her Majesty the Queen.

My visit to Ireland will build on the good will generated by high-level Irish visits to Australia including, most recently, by President Mary Robinson. I look forward to reaffirming the strong community links between Australia and Ireland and to discussing with the Taoiseach, Mr Reynolds, and his Government a range of international economic and political issues of interest to both countries. I have also been invited to address the National Dail (Parliament) in Dublin.

I shall have an opportunity to make a very brief visit to the village of Villers-Bretonneux in Northern France to pay my respects on the 75th anniversary of the decisive campaigns of 1918 in the final months of the First World War. I particularly want to thank the people of Villers-Bretonneux for the close friendship they have maintained with Australia since those days.

Before returning to Australia, I shall visit Monaco to take part in the formal presentation of Sydney's bid to host the Olympic Games in the year 2000.

Canberra
13 August 1993