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PRIME MINISTER

34/95

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

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR-GENERAL

I will shortly be recommending to the Administrator of the Government of the Commonwealth an appointment to the office of Auditor-General.

The new Auditor-General will be Mr Pat Barrett AM, a distinguished senior public servant, and currently Deputy Secretary to the Department of Finance. Mr Barrett has had major responsibilities across the range of Commonwealth activity, including for such reform initiatives as the Financial Management Improvement Program, Program Management and Budgeting, and Program Evaluation. He is a Fellow of the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, and the Royal Institute of Public Administration in Australia. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the 1992 Australia Day Honours List, for his contribution to public administration.

Although the office of Auditor-General has been vacant since January when Mr John Taylor AO retired, the Government has held off appointing his replacement in the hope that it would be possible to do so within a reasonable time in accordance with the provisions of the replacement legislation currently before the Parliament. Amendments made in the Senate to the *Auditor-General Bill 1994* suggest that it may be some time before a new Act is in place, and the Government has therefore decided that it cannot leave this important position vacant any longer.

In accordance with the provisions of the proposed replacement legislation, it is intended that the appointee's term of office be limited to seven years, rather than to age 65 as the existing legislation provides. The Government hopes that the Parliament will pass the necessary amendments as soon as possible.

I wish Mr Barrett well in his appointment, which will take effect from 2 May 1995.

CANBERRA
24 April 1995