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PRIME MINISTER

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

One of the themes of this years' South Pacific Forum is tourism and its role in the region's economic development. To support this theme Australia has proposed a package of additional measures to develop ecotourism in the region.

The package, worth \$625,000 initially, will involve extensive short-term training programs both for tourism planners and private sector operators, involving an intensive six weeks training program, attachment to relevant Australian institutions and long-term follow up.

In addition, five post graduate fellowships will be offered to train public and private sector tourism managers.

A third element will provide support for the conservation of sensitive island environmental or cultural sites of national tourism significance.

Tourism already makes a major contribution to the regional economy. In most island countries it is already the largest source of foreign exchange earnings, with strong growth predicted through to the end of the century.

But the region still accounts for only one per cent of the global tourism market and has enormous untapped potential.

For example, tourist numbers to Australia are expected to rise to six million by 2000.

Each extra one per cent of the foreign arrivals to Australia Forum island countries are able to attract would add 3,000 jobs and contribute an extra \$80 million in foreign exchange earnings to the region.

One of the South Pacific's greatest attractions is its unique environment. How to use the environment effectively for tourism while protecting it is one of the region's biggest challenges. This scheme is a start in that direction.

MADANG

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