



PRIME MINISTER

144/95

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

OCEANS POLICY

The Government has agreed to a proposal for the development of a coordinated national policy on the management of Australia's marine resource. Given the importance of this issue and that it crosses many areas of Government activity, I have asked my Department to coordinate development of the oceans policy. Extensive consultation will take place in 1996 to ensure that the views and interests of all parts of the community are considered.

An integrated oceans policy for Australia will assist in dealing with problems in the marine environment, taking the opportunities offered by our marine areas, and meeting our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The opportunities provided by Australia's marine environment are likely to increase considerably as technology advances. We need to position ourselves to take these opportunities in the EEZ as they arise, as well as ensuring that current uses of marine resources are efficient and sustainable. The overall goal of the policy should be to provide the vision that will promote the efficient, sustainable use of Australia's marine resources in the EEZ while conserving the biological base of those resources. It will also need to consider the needs of indigenous people in marine resource use and management.

This is an important issue that will benefit from the input from scientists at today's meeting of my Science and Engineering Council (PMSEC).

The discussion at the PMSEC meeting was a significant contribution to our approach to marine science. At the meeting, an expert group of scientists presented a paper titled Australia's Ocean Age: Science and Technology for Managing our Ocean Territory. They argued that innovative and sustainable use of marine resources is increasingly likely to make a significant contribution to Australia's economic prosperity.

CANBERRA
8 DECEMBER 1995

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The paper "Australia's Ocean Age: Science and Technology for Managing our Ocean Territory" is available from the PM's Press Office, the Office of the Chief Scientist, or from Australian Government Publishing Service outlets. It is also available on the world wide web at: <http://www.nla.gov.au/pmc/ocs/ocean.html>