



PRIME MINISTER

143/9

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

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING COUNCIL MEETING

The Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council (PMSEC) met today in Canberra to consider the application of science and technology to managing our oceans, and developing our plantation forests.

Today's meeting has been valuable to the Government in spelling out the major role of science and technology in these crucial environmental and resource areas. The reports, presentations and discussions at today's meeting have given us clear messages about promoting and using science for sustainable development of some of our most valuable and promising resource areas. I have asked the Ministers for Primary Industries and Energy, Industry, Science and Technology, and the Environment, Sport and Territories, to follow up the key issues emerging from today, and report on how we can ensure that the best science applied to preserving and developing the Exclusive Economic Zone and our plantation forests.'

The discussion at today's PMSEC meeting was based on papers and presentations by independent working groups of scientists and industry leaders.

The paper "Australia's Ocean Age: Science and Technology for Managing our Ocean Territory" focussed on how science and technology can assist in the effective management of Australia's marine resources. Australia now has a responsibility under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to further advance exploration and marine research, so as to sustainably develop, preserve and protect the marine environment.

The paper and presentation on 'Research and Development Contributing to Plantation Forestry' examined the substantial and growing contribution which plantation forests make to our supply of wood products, and the major value-adding roles of research and development in improving the sustainability and yields of plantation forests, and in the use of plantation-grown timber. The Council heard of the close collaboration which has developed between researchers and industry, leading to the successful application of research to the management, sustainability and productivity of our forest plantations.

The PMSEC meeting also heard presentations on the Government's innovation statement released earlier this week, including the specific projects which will be funded under the \$62.4 million Major National Research Facilities program; Science and Technology in APEC; and Australia's science and engineering base for information and communications services and technologies.

I also informed the meeting today that the Chief Scientist would become a statutory office holder within my portfolio. This will build on the current arrangements for science and technology, and increase the already high profile given to science and technology by the Government.

The Council (PMSEC) was created as part of the advisory and coordination arrangements announced in the May 1989 science and technology policy statement. It meets twice a year, to provide a major forum for consideration of issues of national significance in science and technology, with a particular emphasis on the application of research to economic and social objectives. This provides an opportunity for the Prime Minister and senior Ministers to discuss issues with leaders of science, industry, and the major scientific institutions.

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:

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or from the world wide web at:
<http://www.nla.gov.au/pmc/ocs/ocean.html>
or from Australian Government Publishing Service outlets.