



## **PRIME MINISTER**

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

#### **BOUGAINVILLE PEACE TALKS**

Leaders from all the major Bougainvillean factions will meet in Cairns today to discuss ways of resolving the six year old conflict on Bougainville. The PNG Government has endorsed the meeting and asked Australia to facilitate it.

The Australian Government is providing a venue and the necessary security arrangements for this meeting. This will allow leaders to discuss freely the future of their island and propose ways of settling the conflict there which could then be taken up in discussions with the PNG Government.

The Australian Government will not be a participant in the Cairns talks.

The Australian Government strongly supports a settlement and stands ready to assist in restoring the economy on Bougainville, particularly the restoration of education and health services as soon as circumstances permit. I am pleased that the Commonwealth Secretariat has expressed its readiness to assist in the Cairns talks.

But it is only Bougainvilleans themselves, in conjunction with the PNG Government, who can create a lasting solution to the conflict.

The issues involved cannot be settled by force. The PNG Government has said that peace can be brought to Bougainville only through a political settlement.

I have sent a message to the participants urging them to make the most of the opportunity which these talks provide to demonstrate that they are truly committed to peace on Bougainville and to examine new ways of resolving the conflict and restoring security and prosperity to the island.

**CANBERRA**  
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