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## **PRIME MINISTER**

1/96

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

#### **DEATH OF FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND**

France, Europe and the world have lost a distinguished statesman and outstanding leader in François Mitterrand.

Under his 14-year Presidency, France played an international role that was engaged, energetic and constructive. His most enduring legacy will be the vision of a unified, peaceful and outward-looking Europe. In particular, François Mitterrand was determined that France and Germany should work together in building a united Europe. He was an important force for cooperation between Europe and the United States. Under President Mitterrand, France was active in seeking resolution to the problems of Cambodia and the Middle East.

In the South Pacific, François Mitterrand pursued policies of reconciliation and understanding towards the indigenous peoples of France's overseas territories. His decision to place a moratorium on French nuclear testing was a valuable and far-sighted contribution towards the goal of nuclear non-proliferation and won widespread appreciation in our region.

In domestic affairs, François Mitterrand's commitment to human rights, social justice and reform and his concern to apply innovation and creativity in preparing for the future will leave their mark on France and beyond.

François Mitterrand was a truly impressive individual. He bore his illness with courage and dignity. Throughout, he maintained an acute intellectual capacity, a profound sense of history and, as always, he had a crystal-clear sense of France's interests and its place in the world. I am very glad I had the opportunity to know François Mitterrand personally.

On behalf of the people of Australia, I extend my deepest sympathies to President Mitterrand's family, and to the Government and people of France. Senator Evans will attend the memorial mass in his honour in Paris on behalf of the Australian Government and people.

**CANBERRA**

**9 January 1996**