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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

24 OCTOBER 1990

In my Statement on the Environment of July 1989, I foreshadowed an inquiry by the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) into the use of coastal zone resources. The coastal zone presents some of the most complex natural resource management issues facing all levels of government in Australia. Over the next few years our success or failure in achieving sustainable development and conservation in the coastal zone will have a major and lasting impact on the quality of life of present and future generations.

Because of the range of issues involved, it is not possible for the RAC to cover them adequately in a single inquiry. The first reference will therefore deal with the Building, Tourism and Associated Development aspects of the use of coastal zone resources. I have written to the Premiers and Chief Ministers seeking the involvement of the States and Territories in the development of the terms of reference for this inquiry. Industry, union and community groups are also being invited to participate in the broad-ranging process of consultation, before the terms of reference are formally settled.

Because of the complexity of the issues, and the need to take account of work already done, or in hand, over the next few months officials from my Department and the RAC will be discussing the proposed terms of reference with State and Territory representatives and with other interested organisations. These consultations will encompass key issues, the information sources, research needs, timing and other arrangements for the proposed inquiry. On the basis of that information the Government will finalise the Terms of Reference and appoint Special Commissioners. The inquiry is expected to start early next year.