



# PRIME MINISTER

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

Commonwealth Day is an occasion for reflection on the continuing international relevance of the Commonwealth of Nations.

The strength and durability of the Commonwealth lies in its diversity and size - 50 countries representing a quarter of the world's population - together with mutual respect for each other's national sovereignty, traditions and culture. These characteristics have enabled the Commonwealth to remain relevant to its member countries in rapidly changing times. In keeping with the pace of developments on the international scene brought about through the collapse of communism and resurgence of democracy, the Commonwealth itself has undergone significant change.

The Heads of Government meeting in Harare last October marked a turning point as leaders sought to build on Commonwealth achievements in working for an end to apartheid and the establishment of a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Like other countries represented at Harare, Australia also pledged to work with renewed vigour for the protection and promotion of democracy and the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government and fundamental human rights. This presents a challenging agenda for the 1990s, but it is one which the Commonwealth is well qualified to address.

9 MARCH 1992