



PRIME MINISTER

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

WA ROYAL COMMISSION

Recent statements by Mr Templeman and today's statement by the WA Royal Commission chairman, Mr Kennedy, that the Commonwealth Government has impeded the ability of the commission to obtain tax information are incorrect.

In particular I draw attention to the final paragraph of Mr Kennedy's press statement of today.

I have received advice today from the Commissioner of Taxation that a WA police unit is working with the Royal Commission and that this unit is empowered to seek tax information from the Australian Tax Office.

Further, the Commissioner of Taxation has advised that "we stand ready to assist the Royal Commission by supplying information to its police unit, as authorised by Section 3E (of the Tax Administration Act)."

At this stage, I am informed that no use has been made of this facility.

If this has come about because of friction between the police unit and others associated with the Commission, as some have suggested, this is not an issue for the Commonwealth Government.

The central issue is to ensure that the public interest is served and that guilty parties are brought to account.

I am therefore disturbed by the implication that I and subsequent Federal Treasurers have sought to obstruct this process in any way.

That this is not the case is made clear by successive documents provided to me and to other Treasurers which I have released with this statement.

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Finally, I am concerned that the Commission seems to be suggesting that it is unable to bring this matter to a successful conclusion.

I am particularly concerned given the view of the chairman of the Australian Securities Commission that his ability to prosecute has been severely hampered by the existence of this and other Royal Commissions.

CANBERRA
May 14, 1992