



PRIME MINISTER

47/92

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. P.J. KEATING, MP
ACCESS TO TAX INFORMATION FOR ROYAL COMMISSIONS

As I made clear yesterday the Commonwealth has always been prepared to make relevant taxation information available to the WA Royal Commission.

However, I remain strongly of the view that such access should be limited to relevant information of a specific nature and not constitute a broad "fishing licence" approach in order to protect the right to privacy of Australians.

It has been the consistent view of the Commonwealth and the Commissioner of Taxation that there is a mechanism by which relevant tax information can be obtained by the Royal Commission under Section 3E of the Tax Administration Act.

The Royal Commission appears not to accept the Taxation Commissioner's interpretation of that Act.

To put beyond doubt the Commonwealth's preparedness to assist the Royal Commission in seeking relevant tax information the Commonwealth will propose an amendment to Section 3E, nominating Royal Commissions as agencies which can seek such information.

This would give Royal Commissions the same authority to seek tax information that is available to law enforcement agencies specified under the Act.

To this end, I have asked the Treasurer, Mr Dawkins, and the Taxation Commissioner, Mr Trevor Boucher, to consult the WA Royal Commission as soon as is practicable on how best to structure the amendment to Section 3E.

I trust this will satisfy the Commission's need for access to relevant tax information.

Further, I seek the support of the Opposition to allow a speedy passage of the proposed amendment.

CANBERRA
May 15, 1992