



PRIME MINISTER

104/92

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP ESD POLICIES

The Prime Minister today chaired another roundtable meeting of major national interest groups to discuss the development of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) policies.

The following is a precis of his opening remarks:

The ESD process has been very worthwhile. It has brought together a wide range of interests and groups, who have, through the nine working groups and the intersectoral reports, made a large number of recommendations which the Government must now address.

The Government remains committed to the process and to the timetable I made clear at the ESD roundtable in March. Under that timetable, a national ESD strategy will be in place by the end of the year.

Since the March roundtable, we have released a draft strategy and are now taking into account the submissions received regarding that strategy.

In the Budget, we announced a range of ESD measures, including funding for climate change research, work on energy efficiency, tax deductions for environmental protection measures, and feral animal control.

During the year, we have also taken other actions, such as the National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Strategy, coastal zone tasks, the landcare and environment action program, and the signing of the Rio Conventions.

Contrary to some reports, the ESD process has not stalled, and in regard to the process and recommendations, the Government now plans to:

- . Take into account submissions on the draft strategy and comments made at today's roundtable
- . Continue negotiations and consultations, in particular with the States, to develop a national strategy and a firm set of policies and objectives. The Council of Australian Governments meeting later this year will discuss these issues.

- . Pursue, through consultation, the positions of States on ESD working group recommendations and the recommendations of the intersectoral reports.
- . Determine the apportionment of responsibilities and jurisdiction for policies on particular issues.
- . Detail the extent to which recommendations are already being implemented or locked into place in existing policy of the Commonwealth or States.
- . Make clear what policies and actions we will adopt in relation to areas where we have sole responsibility.
- . Also make clear, through consultations, our objectives on issues - the vast majority of issues - which require discussion with States and local Government, because sole or primary responsibility for implementation of those policies does not lie with Commonwealth.

Some of the most important issues - not in order of priority - emerging from the recommendations and on which we place a high priority are:

- . Land and water management, including salinity and the Murray-Darling basin.
- . Feral animals and other pests.
- . Remnant vegetation cover and soil degradation.
- . Marine protection systems, and multiple use of coastal waters.
- . Industrial waste production and disposal.
- . Air and water quality.
- . Urban infrastructure problems.
- . The environment management industry.
- . Energy production, conservation and management.

They are just some of the issues on which we place a high priority.

I can assure everyone involved in this process that we will keep at the forefront of our thinking the recommendations of the working groups and the intersectoral reports, and finalise our policies on ESD by the end of the year.

CANBERRA

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