



PRIME MINISTER

108/92

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

NORTH WEST CAPE NAVAL COMMUNICATION STATION

The Government is pleased to announce that an Australian, Commander Cris George, assumes command today of the North West Cape Naval Communication Station.

Today's command change is part of a phased handover of the Station to Australian control, which will see it become an entirely Australian facility by the end of the century. The transition in the Station's management is the result of arrangements worked out between the Australian and United States Governments, and the State Government of Western Australia.

Since the Station commenced operation in the 1960s to serve the needs of US Navy submarines, it has been a fine example of defence cooperation between Australia and the United States. The Station has operated as a joint facility since 1974, enabling the Royal Australian Navy, as well as the US Navy, to carry out vital communication with their submarines.

The Station's work under Australian control will continue to be important in allowing the RAN to communicate with its submarine force, a force whose effectiveness will be greatly enhanced as the Collins Class submarines come into service from 1995.

The Australian Government also welcomes continuing US joint use of the Station until the end of the decade. The Government values highly the continuing contribution that our alliance partnership with the United States makes to Australian and regional security.

The Government's defence policy has been focused on achieving greater self reliance within the framework of a strong alliance with the United States and effective regional cooperation.

The Government will be represented at the command handover ceremony by the Hon Gordon Bilney MP, Acting Minister for Defence. I join with Mr Bilney in assuring all Australians, and the local community in particular, that the North West Cape Communication Station will continue to play an integral part in the defence of Australia well into the next century.

CANBERRA

1 October 1992