

19



PRIME MINISTER

130/92

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE POLICY ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Following Cabinet's consideration today, the Government has decided to end the policy of discriminating against homosexuals in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The change will take effect immediately.

This decision reflects broad support in the Australian community for the removal of employment discrimination of any kind, including discrimination on grounds of sexual preference. The decision brings ADF policy into line with the tolerant attitudes of Australians generally.

The ADF acknowledges that there are male and female homosexuals among its members and has advised the Government that these members are no longer actively sought out or disciplined because of their sexual preference.

In making this decision, my Cabinet colleagues and I were mindful of the attitudes and opinions of members of the ADF and the ex-Service community. The Government appreciates the high standards of dedication and professionalism expected of ADF personnel, but considers that the decision will not have the adverse effect on morale and cohesion predicted by some.

The Government believes that the new ADF Instruction on Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour, whether homosexual or heterosexual, tabled by Senator Ray in the Senate in June 1992 and which Cabinet today endorsed, provides adequate protection for individuals against unwelcome sexual advances and gives officers the necessary authority to deal with infringements.

The ADF Instruction takes thorough account of all forms of sexual behaviour which could affect operational effectiveness, group cohesion, morale, command relationships, and protects underage persons within the ADF.

The Government considers that the Instruction on Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour is a far-reaching and commendable reform. It has been praised by the Human Rights Commissioner and the Caucus Joint Working Group which looked into the ADF policy. I congratulate Senator Ray, Mr Bilney and the members of the Department of Defence and ADF responsible for its development.

CANBERRA
23 November 1992