



## **PRIME MINISTER**

78/93

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

**REPORT OF THE MINING COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL FOR  
ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION**

I welcome the report, *Exploring for Common Ground*, presented to me today by the Mining Committee of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

In February last year, I invited the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to appoint a committee to seek improvements in consultations, mediation and the resolution of disputes between mining firms and Aboriginal people.

Across much of the mining industry, an intelligent awareness of Aboriginal cultures has developed, and Aboriginal people have increasingly shown that they are prepared to assist the industry in developing the resources in which all of us, as Australians, have an interest.

It has been assumed by many people - and still is, in far too many cases - that the interests of indigenous people and mining companies must conflict.

Where there is recognition and respect for the rights of others, their interests can co-exist to the benefit of all concerned.

Examples such as the agreement between North Flinders Mines and Sons of Gwalia on the one hand and the Central Land Council on the other in regard to gold mining in the Tanami Desert, and the more recent agreements on the Mt Todd mine demonstrate that a willingness on both sides to negotiate can result in mutually beneficial arrangements.

This report challenges some of the assumptions which remain about the relationships between miners and Aboriginal people, identifying common ground as well as remaining areas of difference.

Some of its recommendations, such as ways of improving communications between the parties and negotiating access to land, are directed to companies and to organisations which represent Aboriginal communities. I hope both will consider the recommendations and act upon them.

Other recommendations, touching on Aboriginal education, employment and heritage protection, will be considered by the Commonwealth Government as soon as possible.

I thank the Chairman of the Committee, Mr Robert Champion de Crespigny, and the committee members - Mr Archie Barton, Ms Jennie George and Mr Wenten Rubuntja - for their efforts and congratulate the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the greater part of the mining industry on the way they have approached this important aspect of reconciliation.

I am also pleased to announce today that the Government will be offering a public award to a company operating in the mining or resources area in Australia which best demonstrates a commitment to constructively addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

This will be a non-cash award, offered this year and open to companies which nominate themselves or which are nominated by Aboriginal community groups.

The proposed Joint Council on Aboriginal Land and Mining would be a most appropriate body to co-ordinate this award.

I believe this award will reinforce the impact of the report I have received today by focussing attention on the many positive elements of the relationship between Aboriginal people and mining companies which the report identifies.

CANBERRA,  
JULY 1, 1993