



PRIME MINISTER

80/93

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

The Leader of the Opposition, Dr Hewson, refused today to distance himself from the statements of Mr Hugh Morgan.

When pressed by Mr Brian Bury on radio station 2UE about whether he agreed with the sentiments expressed by Mr Morgan, Dr Hewson refused to say that he could not abide with Mr Morgan's sentiments. He referred instead to what he called the indecision surrounding the Mabo decision saying that he thought the Mabo decision 'may prove to be unworkable' - an unhelpful observation.

Dr Hewson said it was wrong to see Mabo in terms of reconciliation with the Aboriginal community and wrong that the issues of Mabo and reconciliation should be joined. He apparently has not read the very explicit references in the High Court decision to Aboriginal dispossession and the shame this dispossession has laid upon the nation.

Dr Hewson claimed the Government had adopted a fundamentally divisive position on Mabo, despite the fact that his own statements of last week treated the High Court decision only in terms of benefits it could bestow on mining companies and pastoralists. Dr Hewson was roundly criticised by the Aboriginal community for the callousness of his position.

If Dr Hewson wants to shoot his mouth off on radio he should at least have the courage to say that Mr Hugh Morgan's remarks are extremist and that he will not have a bar of them. He is always talking about leadership. Now is the time for him as the leader of the conservative forces of Australia to nail these extremist sentiments as alien to the Liberal Party's philosophy

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