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PRIME MINISTER

87/93

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

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF MABO

I was pleased to note today that an opinion poll has found that Australians broadly understand the limits of the High Court Mabo decision, and that it does not pose a threat to backyards, or other privately-owned property.

While I have never been one to rely absolutely on the findings of such surveys, it is reassuring to learn that an overwhelming majority of people have seen through the scaremongering. It confirms my confidence in the common sense and fair-mindedness of Australians.

Only seven per cent of those surveyed said they believed the Mabo judgement entitled Aborigines to claim "any" land in Australia, including metropolitan land. Of course, they are ill-informed.

As the Government has maintained since the handing down of the Mabo judgement last year, the decision does not threaten private property rights, and should be viewed as an opportunity rather than as a problem.

My Government continues to work and make progress towards a sensible administrative response to the Mabo decision - a response which will balance the interests of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders with the broad national economic interest.

We are continuing to consult with the States and, as I have said before, we intend to be in a position to introduce Commonwealth legislation during the Budget session of Parliament, commencing on August 17.

CANBERRA
4 AUGUST, 1993