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# PRIME MINISTER

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## STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP TIMETABLE ON MABO LEGISLATION

Today I am meeting with representatives of the mining industry and with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and tomorrow I will meet with representatives of the group which earlier this month gathered at Eva Valley.

The purpose of these meetings is to continue discussions of the Mabo issue and to provide details of the Federal Government's consultative and legislative timetable.

The plan we announced last year is on schedule. To provide the certainty the country needs, passage of legislation is required in these Budget sittings.

The steps in the lead-up to the introduction of final legislation are:

- . The Ministerial Committee on Mabo is at present working intensively on a document which outlines the proposed legislation and this will be released publicly within the next two weeks.
- . With the document's release, the Government will invite comment and further talks will be held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, State and Territory governments and industry.

By mid-September work on drafting the Bill will be in top gear.

The Government will make every endeavour to have the Bill in the House by 1 October.

In introducing the legislation by this date the Government will be meeting its original deadline. On an issue of this magnitude some groups may wish for more time for consultation, but the artificial deadlines now applying in the Parliament close off this option.

It is worth noting that the outline of legislation has been the subject of thorough discussions between

officials from the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, and in the next couple of weeks I expect to have the opportunity to speak to Premiers and Chief Ministers.

I will be in a position to say more about the Government's thinking on the broader aspects of Mabo when the legislation is introduced.

We are continuing to work on ideas which will meet the twin goals which Mabo set us from the start - delivering economic security to investors and holders of existing land title, and to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders an unprecedented measure of historic justice.

Mabo has been the subject of extensive discussion in Australia for more than a year. It has been the cause of both genuine concern and anxiety and some misinformed and inflammatory comment.

But the majority of Australians and majority of interested groups have sought an outcome which is practicable and just - and one which will take us much further than any previous step has taken us towards solving a 200 year old problem.

That is what the Government will do everything in its power to deliver.

CANBERRA, 24 AUGUST 1993