



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON. P.J. KEATING HEWSON'S FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP, PRINCIPLE AND LIBERALISM

Dr Hewson has today sold out Australia's indigenous people, the fair and democratic traditions of his country, and what remained of the liberal traditions of his party.

In his address tonight he will be speaking not for a true Liberal Party, but a party of the new right.

And there is a pathetic and inexcusable dimension to this development - Dr Hewson has brought it about not by strength, but by weakness. By a total failure to lead.

The few remaining moderates within the Liberal Party have been jettisoned along with commonsense, principle and the national interest.

Anyone who thought that the Liberal Party had turned over a new leaf after losing the election on a right wing platform was mistaken.

There is nothing of substance in the Liberal Party's response to the Government's Mabo legislation to suggest that it has been guided by anything more than cynicism and opportunism.

At the end of 12 months of intense and extensive negotiation with the major parties and the achievement of a remarkable degree of consensus and support for the legislation, Dr Hewson now tells the Australian people that a Senate inquiry is needed.

Nothing was ever needed less.

What is needed now is the just resolution which the legislation provides and an end to uncertainty.

Dr Hewson has told the Australian people that he accepts the High Court's judgement on Native Title.

Yet tonight, he will tell them how he will embrace Premier Court's legislation which will wipe out Native Title across Western Australia.

In his press statement of today Dr Hewson talks unctuously about an "undivided Australian nation" but tonight will hand over responsibility for this national issue to a Premier bent on overturning the High Court's decision and denying the rights of indigenous Australians.

I remain confident that most Australians will reject Dr Hewson's "response" for what it is, and that the Government's legislation will survive such cynical and unprincipled opposition.

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
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