



PRIME MINISTER

138/93

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

QUEENSLAND'S NATIVE TITLE BILL

I congratulate Premier Goss for the Native Title (Queensland) Bill introduced into the Queensland Parliament today.

The Queensland Bill will operate in conjunction with the Commonwealth Native Title Bill.

As the Premier of Queensland correctly said "the choice for the States is clear. It is a choice between accepting the High Court decision and participating in a national legislative response on the one hand, or, alternatively taking the path of legal uncertainty and confusion".

Queensland has decisively chosen the former course, and this decision will benefit all Queenslanders - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others.

In stark contrast, Western Australia - alone among the States - has tragically chosen the course of legal uncertainty and confusion.

The ill-concieved and discriminatory Western Australian legislation was guillotined through the upper House last night. As of today, Aboriginal people face the prospect that native title has been extinguished across the entire State.

The only thing standing in the way of this extinguishment of the legal rights of West Australians is the Commonwealth Native Title legislation.

I again urge the passage of the Bill by the Senate.

Queensland is a case study in how States and Territories can work effectively with the Commonwealth legislation. It is proof that cooperation can work.

The cause of justice, and sound and certain management of land across Australia, will be served by passage of the Commonwealth Bill and by other States and Territories following the Queensland example.

CANBERRA

2 December 1993