



PRIME MINISTER

148/93

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON P J KEATING MP NATIVE TITLE BILL - GOVERNMENT AMENDMENTS

The Government this morning circulated a number of carefully considered proposed amendments to the Native Title Bill.

The amendments have been prepared for several reasons:

- I a number respond to the recommendations of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's report on the Bill
- II a number respond to legitimate concerns put to the Government by Aboriginal interests.
- III a number are merely technical improvements or clarifications.
- IV importantly, other proposed amendments involve fine tuning of land management processes arising from the Bill and in particular are designed to make even clearer the certainty the Bill provides to economic interests and other grant holders - on such matters as renewal of pastoral and mining leases.

The proposed Government amendments take into account a wide range of views and interests across all sectors of the community. They represent - as does the Bill itself - a balanced package. They all improve the Bill.

The Opposition's strategy of blanket opposition to all Government amendments is counter-productive and against the interests of all Australians, including industry groups and Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

The fact that the Opposition announced their strategy this morning, prior to circulation of the Government amendments, proves that they are not prepared to consider these amendments and indeed the provisions of the legislation as a whole, on their merits.

Their approach sells out the very interests they claim to be representing.

CANBERRA
15 December 1993