



5

PRIME MINISTER

19/94

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

VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

I am pleased to announce that the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, the Hon Francis Hilly, will be visiting Australia from 11-18 March as a guest of the Australian government. He will visit Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney and Cairns, as well as Canberra. Prime Minister Hilly will be accompanied by his wife, Mrs Fiona Hilly.

Australia has a long-standing and warm relationship with Solomon Islands, one of our closest neighbours. Prime Minister Hilly's visit will provide an opportunity to discuss ways in which we can build on this solid foundation in the years ahead. Australia will provide \$11 million in development assistance to the Solomon Islands in 1993/4. We also have an active bilateral defence co-operation program.

Prime Minister Hilly will be keen to explore the scope for expanding Solomon Islands exports to Australia. To this end, he is accompanied on the visit by a delegation from the Solomon Islands business community. At present, bilateral trade is weighted heavily in Australia's favour.

My discussions with Prime Minister Hilly will also focus on regional issues of mutual interest, particularly the 25th South Pacific Forum, which Australia will host in Brisbane in August.

CANBERRA

11 FEBRUARY 1994