



PRIME MINISTER

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

ATTENDANCE AT D-DAY COMMEMORATIONS

At the invitation of the British and French Governments, I will attend 50th anniversary commemorative celebrations of the D-Day landings in Normandy which took place on and around 6 June 1944. D-Day, the start of the Battle of Normandy, was the prelude to the liberation of France and the turning point in the battle for Europe.

Heads of State and Heads of Government of those countries which contributed forces to the landings will attend ceremonies in the United Kingdom on 5 June and in Normandy on 6 June.

An allied force of more than 130,000 members took part in the Normandy landings, the largest amphibious assault in history. Amongst their number were some 2,600 Australians, most of them from the 14,000 members of the Royal Australian Air Force who were serving in squadrons based in Britain. An estimated 500 Australian naval personnel also served in some of the 1,200 warships which supported the landings. Ten of these ships had Australians in command.

I will attend several ceremonies near Portsmouth before crossing the English channel to Normandy.

Principal activities in France will be centred around Omaha Beach with combined or individual commemorative activities being held in particular towns and villages in the Normandy region. I also expect to attend a memorial service at the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Bayeux where 16 RAAF personnel are buried.

I will also visit other memorials in the United Kingdom and France which have a special significance for Australia.

I will be accompanied during the commemorations by four Australian veterans representing each of the three services and those who were held as prisoners of war in Europe.

These representatives will be selected by the relevant Australian ex-service organisations.

I will also take the opportunity of the visit to hold official discussions in Europe.

CANBERRA
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