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PRIME MINISTER

55/94

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

I welcome the Democrats' contribution to the Republic debate.

Like the Government, they have recognised the importance of this issue to the aspirations of the current generation of Australians, and to the legacy of appropriate democratic and independent institutions we want to leave for our children.

We are committed to the course of action on the Republic debate we announced to the Australian public some time ago - that the Australian people should be in a position to decide by referendum later in the decade whether Australia should become a republic.

We have always believed that this decision is too important to be rushed, and, for that reason, the Government will formulate its position only after detailed consideration of the issues. We have set ourselves a carefully measured program:

- . the preparation of a comprehensive options paper on how to achieve an Australian head of state (the Republic Advisory Committee Report);
- . the consideration of these options by a Cabinet committee with a report to Cabinet later this year;
- . a parallel education campaign to raise the general awareness of governmental structures and operation.

The Government will continue on the basis of this program.

The contribution that the Democrats have made shows that the debate on the Republic that we sought is now taking place.

I hope that others will join the debate in the same constructive way.

CANBERRA
13 July 1994