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PRIME MINISTER

59/94

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

THE COALITION'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AGENDA

It is little wonder the Coalition has split over its cobbled together Constitutional reform package.

In their poll-driven haste to find an alternative to the Government's considered interest in Constitutional reform, the Liberals have come up with a mish-mash of measures, some of which nobody could accept - not even the National Party.

Over the past 48 hours we've seen Mr Reith isolated as the only supporter of Citizen Initiated Referenda - described by National Party Leader, Tim Fischer, as "law-making cancer."

Mr Downer - a born-again Constitutional reformer - has walked away from Mr Reith on CIR, after originally countenancing the idea.

Mr Downer reportedly continues to support a range of measures, none of which addresses the principal flaw in the Constitution - that our Head of State is not an Australian.

So the Opposition's approach to Constitutional reform seems to be that if the Government has an agenda, they had better have one too - never mind if it is a zany and untenable one.

Just when it looked like the Opposition had finally come up with a policy - the first since the arrival of the "new" leadership team - it turns out to be a divisive and untenable pot pourri.

Sydney
27 July, 1994