



135/95

PRIME MINISTER

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

APEC BUSINESS TRAVEL CARD

Australia will introduce an APEC business travel card to facilitate entry into Australia by accredited business people from APEC economies.

This follows the recommendations of the Pacific Business Forum for easier access for business travellers.

Australia is developing the following arrangements to make short-term business travel easier

- a system of accreditation for business travellers run in partnership between the business communities and participating member economies
- a business travel card rather than a visa as a means of identifying business travellers and facilitating entry.

Over 200,000 business people visited Australia last year and this number is rising rapidly each year. Australia is committed to streamlining and accelerating its visa and entry arrangements and the application of advanced technology to this task.

Australia is proposing the establishment of a working group with all those APEC economies interested in jointly developing such a system. Not every APEC member might be able to join such an arrangement immediately, but all would be welcome when ready.

Australia also endorses the recommendations of the PBF on business temporary residence. We are already simplifying our entry rules and streamlining processing for longer term temporary residence, as recently recommended by the Roach Committee and accepted by the Government.

Greater ease of travel will help APEC meet its aims of stimulating trade and investment in the region. Beyond the greater ease of travel for our business people an APEC business travel card would be a symbol of APEC's potential to build bridges in our region.

OSAKA
19 NOVEMBER, 1995