



5

PRIME MINISTER

SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM

I will attend the 28th South Pacific Forum to be held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 17 to 19 September.

My government attaches great importance to Australia's partnership with the countries of the South Pacific. We are working closely with them to help them achieve their goals for the future of their people, and Australia's aid programme is a tangible demonstration of our commitment.

Good progress has been achieved over the past few years in developing responses to the challenges faced by the region. This year's Forum is an opportunity to advance the agenda South Pacific leaders have adopted for economic reform and sustainable management of the region's resources.

I look forward very much to meeting for the first time those leaders who have taken office since last year's Forum, as well as renewing contact with others.

This will be the last Forum for the current Secretary-General, the Hon Ieremia Tabai, who has served the region with distinction for six years and whose contribution is much appreciated.

7 September 1997