

CONVERSION TO METRIC SYSTEM

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

Following detailed consideration of the recommendations made by the Senate Select Committee on the adoption of the Metric System of Weights and Measures, the Government has decided that Australia should convert to the Metric System as soon as possible.

The Commonwealth has notified the States of this decision and has suggested that arrangements be made for a conference with them to discuss co-operation in those areas where co-operation may be required.

The Government believes that the lasting benefits which will result from this decision will greatly outweigh the not inconsiderable transitional difficulties involved.

The Government's aim is to complete the changeover during a period of ten years although conversion will be completed much sooner than this in some sectors.

It is proposed to set up a Metric Conversion Board, on which a wide range of interests will be represented, to plan, guide, and facilitate conversion. The Board will be responsible to the Government through the Minister for Education & Science and will be expected to make appropriate recommendations from time to time after full consultation with those concerned.

Although the Government realises that some compensation may be paid in such unusual and special cases as are accepted by the Government on the recommendation of the Metric Conversion Board it is expected that, as in other countries the costs of effecting the change will, in general, be borne by those incurring them. By allowing time for natural obsolescence and depreciation of plant and machinery the cost of conversion will be greatly reduced. Experience in other countries such as Japan - where conversion is complete - has shown that by forethought and good planning these costs can be greatly reduced.

The decision to convert is in line with decisions which have already been taken in the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand and South East Asian countries and in announcing it the Government wishes to pay tribute to the work of the Senate Select Committee under the leadership of the late Senator Keith Laught.

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CANBERRA  
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