

FOR PRESS:

FM No. 80/1971

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

The Prime Minister, Mr. William McMahon, this afternoon released the texts of the letters between himself and Mr. Gorton.

The texts are attached.

CANBERRA
13 August 1971

The Prime Minister's letter to Mr. Gorton

12 August 1971

My dear John,

I refer to our discussion this afternoon when I said that I had given the most careful consideration to your decision to write a series of articles for the "Sunday Australian", the first of which has already been published.

In my opinion, your action breaches basic principles of Cabinet solidarity and unity. Your first article deals with a number of controversial issues involving other Ministers and affecting their integrity.

These Ministers are not free to comment if these principles are to be respected. If any other practice were to be permitted, a precedent would be created which would, I believe, make the Cabinet system of Government unworkable.

I know how deeply you feel about the contents of the recent book. But other Ministers have had to endure this type of criticism, which is part and parcel of political life. The overriding consideration, in my view, must be Cabinet solidarity and unity.

I will make a short statement this evening stating that I have discussed this matter with you and that you have, in accordance with my request, agreed to tender your resignation to me.

His Excellency the Governor-General has been informed.

Yours sincerely,

William McMahon

Mr. Gorton's letter to the Prime Minister

My dear Prime Minister,

I acknowledge your letter of 12 August concerning our discussion this afternoon.

In my recollection the only article you referred to was the one already published, which you said in your view breached Cabinet solidarity and unity. You said that as a result of this article and your feeling concerning it you felt you must ask for my resignation.

In accordance with your request, I now tender you that resignation.

Yours sincerely,

J.G. GORTON

12 August 1971