

FOR PRESS :

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CHANGED DATE FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF COMMONWEALTH DAY

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt.

It has been decided, in consultation with the Premiers, that Commonwealth Day will in future be observed in Australia on the day on which The Queen's Official Birthday is celebrated, instead of on the present date, May 24.

We think of The Queen as Head of the Commonwealth as well as Queen of Australia. It therefore seems fitting that we should combine the two observances, which are so closely linked in spirit, and have in recent years been separated by only a few days.

The British Government recently announced its intention to combine the observance of Commonwealth Day and The Queen's Official Birthday. Our decision therefore will maintain the practice of a joint observance in the two countries of these two events in the life of the Commonwealth.

In future, the flying of flags by the Commonwealth on the Monday of the weekend which has hitherto marked the Official Birthday of Her Majesty, will now mark also the observance of Commonwealth Day.

The Premiers will be announcing details of the arrangements to be made for the observances in the States.

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CANBERRA,  
1ST APRIL, 1966.

Background Note :

The present date of Commonwealth Day, May 24, is the date of Queen Victoria's birthday. Empire Day was celebrated on that date between 1902 and 1958. Since then, the day has been known as Commonwealth Day.

The Queen's Official Birthday has been celebrated throughout Australia in recent years on the Monday following the second Saturday in June (Her Majesty's actual birthday is on April 21). Prior to that, the date of the official observance varied, although it was normally about the middle of the year.