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DEPARTMENT OF THE CABINET OFFICE

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton

His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has today, in pursuance of Section 64 of the Constitution, established a new Department of State of the Commonwealth entitled the Department of the Cabinet Office.

The new Department will have the function of servicing the Cabinet and the Committees of Cabinet, which it is planned to extend in number, and of assisting the Prime Minister in the expeditious ordering of Cabinet business and proceedings.

This decision means a division of the former Prime Minister's Department between its Cabinet activities and its non-Cabinet activities with an expansion of service to the Prime Minister on each side.

As is well known, the servicing of Cabinet has hitherto been a part of the functions of the Prime Minister's Department and the Secretary of the Department also had the role of Secretary to the Cabinet. Cabinet pressures have been steadily increasing because of the diversity and complexity of Government action in the Federal sphere, and must be expected to continue to do so. At the same time, the other demands on the Department have risen steadily, and these also will continue to do so.

In the Government's view, the time has now come when these two major activities should be separated if each is to receive the necessary attention and control required for the full conduct of the Government's business.

Sir John Bunting, C.B.E. has been appointed Secretary to the Department of the Cabinet Office and Mr C.L.S. Hewitt, O.B.E., has been appointed Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department.

Both Permanent Heads will be members of the Defence Committee.

CANBERRA,
11 March 1968