

FOR PRESS :

PM. NO. 67/1971

BRITAIN AND THE E. E. C.

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr William McMahon

The Prime Minister (Mr McMahon) said that a decision by Britain to join the European Economic Community would create special problems for a number of important Australian industries. It would also call for adjustments in Australian trading arrangements with Europe and an increasing emphasis on the development of new markets.

"We have always recognised that the decision to join the Community was one for Britain herself", Mr McMahon said, "but, at the same time, we have consistently pressed for recognition of, and consideration for, Australia's substantial trading interests with Britain.

"As it became more apparent that the Six would be willing to admit Britain, Australia made further representations to ensure that there would be, in respect of her own trade with Britain, a reasonable transitional period in which any necessary adjustments required by Britain's entry could be made.

"The Government decided that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Anthony, should go to Britain and to the member countries of the Community, to bring personally before them the case which Australia had been pressing through Ministerial and diplomatic channels and in other ways over an extended period. Our purpose was to ensure that, in the crucial stage of the negotiations between Britain and the Six, Australia's case would be received and appreciated at the highest level.

"Mr Anthony has pressed Australia's case strenuously in the face of formidable difficulties. The Government commends the effort he has made on behalf of Australia and the industries and communities concerned," Mr McMahon said.

"It is a matter for regret that Britain has not pressed our case with the Six to an outcome satisfactory to us.

"The Government will seek to maintain, as far as possible, its trade with Britain and the countries of Europe. At the same time, it will continue and increase efforts to develop new markets throughout the rest of the world.

"I am informed that some time will elapse before the full impact of any decision by Britain to enter the Common Market is felt by those industries and communities in Australia likely to be affected. However, the Government will, in the meantime, be giving urgent and close attention to the problems which will be posed in these areas by such a development and to ways and means of meeting them."

---

CANBERRA,  
30 June 1971