



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 323

11 September 1974

REFERENCE TO THE TEXTILES AUTHORITY

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, announced today that he had sent a reference to the Textiles Authority within the Industries Assistance Commission covering yarns, knitted fabrics and towelling. Mr Whitlam said that this action was being taken as a result of high and rising levels of imports and an apparent total availability of such goods on the Australian market substantially in excess of previous levels.

The goods covered by the reference include acrylic and wool yarns, warp and weft knit fabrics, and terry towelling and towels.

The reference seeks the advice of the Authority on whether action should be taken in terms of the GATT Textiles Arrangement to restrain imports into Australia. The Authority has been asked to report as soon as possible but within a maximum period of 60 days. Australia acceded to the GATT Arrangement earlier this year and as a result of a previous reference to the Textiles Authority, restraint negotiations have recently been concluded with several countries on certain articles of apparel.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the question of whether it would be necessary to have negotiations on the goods in question with exporting countries would have to await examination of the recommendations of the Textiles Authority. Recent press reports that the Government had already sought negotiations with the Japanese Government were not correct. However, the Japanese Government had been informed recently that a reference to the Textiles Authority was under consideration. This had been done in the spirit of the understanding contained in the Japan/Australia Commerce Agreement that where Japan has substantive trade in particular products Australia would inform Japan in advance before action such as that now decided upon was taken.

Mr Whitlam said that, although it is not clear to the Government at this stage that restraint action on all the goods covered by this latest reference is necessary, he considered it important that the Government be able to take the initiative in having investigations undertaken so that action can be taken promptly if found necessary.

The Prime Minister invited manufacturers and other interested parties to start preparing submissions now to the Authority which would announce arrangements for public hearings shortly.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that should the need for restraint action emerge from the report of the Textiles Authority, goods ordered overseas but not shipped would be subject to the terms of any export restraints that may be found necessary.

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