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PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

DECEMBER 19, 1975

THE DEPARTMENTS OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE AND BUSINESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

The division of responsibility between the new Departments of Industry and Commerce and of Business and Consumer Affairs is a logical development under the Government's proposals to streamline administration and eliminate duplication.

The Department of Industry and Commerce is under a Minister who is a member of the Cabinet.

It is the principal contact point for industry, as well as being the policy making Department, drawing together matters relating to tertiary industry and manufacturing industry.

The Department of Business and Consumer Affairs groups the regulatory bodies, which are removed from the purely legalistic Attorney Generals Department. The result will be to give them a more practical application while ensuring that the interests of consumers are taken into account adequately in any decisions which are made.

The decision to place under one Ministry such agencies as the Industries Assistance Commission, the Temporary Assistance Authority, the Prices Justification Tribunal, and the Trade Practices Commission is in accordance both with the recommendations of the Jackson Committee and with sound administrative practice.

It should lead to rationalisation, consistency and improved communication.

Industry and commerce will be looking to the Department of Industry and Commerce as an ally in putting matters before the Industries Assistance Commission just as rural industry will be looking to the Department of Primary Industry.

It is important therefore that the IAC should be in a neutral department where the interests of the community as a whole can be weighed.

There is no question of limiting access by industry to the IAC, or of restricting references made to it.

Ministers and expert officers from other Departments will continue to play important roles in referring matters to the Commission and in dealing with its reports.

I am sure that industry will notice an improvement in its relations with the IAC from these administrative arrangements.