



PRIME MINISTER

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MINISTER FOR SPECIAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. John Howard has been appointed Minister for Special Trade Negotiations with the European Economic Community. He will take up his position in the near future and conduct his first round of negotiations in Europe in October and November.

Mr. Howard remains Minister Assisting the Prime Minister. He will work in close collaboration with the Ministers for Overseas Trade and for Foreign Affairs.

The Member for Farrer, Mr. W. C. Fife, will become Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs.

Mr. Howard's appointment has been made because Australia needs to be represented at the highest level, on a continuing basis, if the bilateral trade problems facing Australia and the EEC are to be resolved adequately.

The need for this high level appointment became clear during my discussions in Europe with the President of the Commission and with heads of a number of European Governments. The decision to appoint a Minister to lead these negotiations demonstrates the importance which Australia places on its trading relations with Western Europe.

The Common Market countries have a total population of 260 million. They comprise the world's largest trading bloc, accounting for \$300,000 million dollars, or 40% of world trade annually.

Mr. Howard will lead discussions and negotiations with the governments of the nine member states and the Commission in Brussels on all bilateral and multilateral economic and trade matters in which Australia is involved.

These negotiations, as agreed in Brussels with the Commission, will cover the totality of Australia's trading relations with Europe, including agricultural items, industrial products and the supply of raw materials.

The discussions present both sides with the opportunity continually to review their positions in the forthcoming multilateral trade negotiations.

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Additionally, there will be closer consultation on other issues of common interest, such as the stance taken by Australia and by the EEC in the negotiation of international commodity stabilisation arrangements, such as those now taking place for sugar and wheat.

Mr. Howard will keep under consideration the question of whether Australia should develop and formalise a structural framework between Australia and the EEC, through which trade could be fostered.

His role will extend to other areas in the international and commercial field, where problems of interest to Australia could profitably be discussed with the EEC.

The Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade, Mr. D. H. McKay, OBE, will be Acting Secretary of the new Department of the Special Trade Negotiator, in addition to his current duties.

Mr. Fife entered Federal Parliament in December 1975 after having been a Member of the N.S.W. Parliament since 1957. He became the N.S.W. Minister for Mines in 1967, Minister for Conservation in 1971 and Minister for Power and Assistant Treasurer in 1972.