

FILE



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

25 July 1979

CONSULTATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

For the first time, regular consultations at both Ministerial and official level are to be held between Australia and the Commission of the European Communities.

The Commission plays a significant role in policy formulation and these regular consultations will ensure that it is continually aware of Australia's interests and concerns. I wrote to President Jenkins proposing regular consultations and he has now informed me that he welcomes this initiative.

This development is a clear vindication of the vigorous policy adopted by this Government over the last two years aimed at establishing a meaningful and equitable relationship between Australia and the communities. Indeed, I recall that during my visit to Brussels in June 1977 it was exceedingly difficult to persuade the Commission to even agree to negotiate with Australia. However, as a result of strong and continuing efforts by a number of Australian Ministers, an agreement has finally been concluded with the E.C., in the context of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The agreement will provide Australian exporters with improved marketing opportunities in Europe. I should emphasise however that we see this agreement as only the first step in a process of change which will bring benefit to all Australian producers.

Exchanges between Australia and the Commission have to date concentrated on the trade and commercial relationship. I would expect that the regular consultations would in addition canvass other important trade-related issues in our overall relationship such as energy and minerals. The consultations which are expected to commence shortly represent an important development in fostering improved relations between Australia and the E.C.