

GRS 360
UNCLASSIFIED
FM CANBERRA 200604Z APR 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 167 OF 20 APRIL

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Australia

MIPT

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT: MINISTERIAL RESIGNATIONS

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MR FRASER'S STATEMENT OF 19 APRIL ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATIONS OF MR MACKELLAR AND MR MOORE (FINAL TWO PARAGRAPHS CONCERNING TRANSFER OF PORTFOLIOS AND PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS HAVE BEEN OMITTED):

WITH REGRET I HAVE ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATIONS OF MR MACKELLAR AS MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND MR MOORE AS MINISTER FOR BUSINESS AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS. BOTH MINISTERS TENDERED THEIR RESIGNATIONS IN VIEW OF QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ARISEN ABOUT THEIR ACTIONS IN RESPECT OF CUSTOMS PROCEDURES AND HAVING REGARD TO THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE ACTIONS.

MR MACKELLAR ASSURES ME, AND I ACCEPT, THAT IN BRINGING A COLOUR TELEVISION SET THROUGH CUSTOMS LAST OCTER, HE HAD NO INTENTION EITHER TO MISLEAD CUSTOMS OR TO EVADE DUTY. HE HAS QUITE PROPERLY ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INCORRECT DECLARATION THAT WAS COMPLETED IN HIS NAME.

THE OUTCOME, HOWEVER, WAS THAT DUTY WAS NOT PAID AT THE TIME - ALTHOUGH SUBSEQUENTLY IT WILL BE PAID - AND THE MINISTER THEREFORE APPEARS TO BE IN A PREFERRED POSITION COMPARED WITH OTHER AUSTRALIANS - SOMETHING THAT MINISTERIAL INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED IN 1976 SOUGHT SPECIFICALLY TO AVOID.

MR MOORE VERY PROPERLY FOLLOWED-UP THE QUESTION OF THE INCORRECTLY COMPLETED CUSTOMS DECLARATION FORM, BUT NOT TO THE EXTENT OF ESTABLISHING WHETHER THE ITEM BROUGHT IN BY MR MACKELLAR WAS DUTIABLE OR NOT.

MR MOORE HAS ASSURED ME, AND I ACCEPT, THAT HIS ERROR IN NOT FOLLOWING UP THIS QUESTION WAS AN ERROR HONESTLY MADE.

THIS GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS UPHELD THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THAT THE APPEARANCE AND REALITY OF INTEGRITY ARE INDISPENSIBLE PARTS OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. I HAVE INSISTED, AND OUR PARTY EXPECTS, THAT RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD BE MAINTAINED. IT IS EXTREMELY REGRETTABLE THAT THESE INSTANCES HAVE COME INTO THE PATH OF OTHERWISE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES BY THESE TWO MINISTERS.

THE PENALTIES IN PUBLIC OFFICE ARE HIGH. BOTH MINISTERS ACCEPT THIS AND HAVE ACCORDINGLY VOLUNTEERED THEIR RESIGNATIONS.

MASON
FCO | WH
SPD