PRESS STATEMENT BY MALCOLM FRASER,
MEMBER FOR WANNON.

Recently, the general public has had a victory. Everyone will recall the indignation that arose when it was announced that the major currency unit when we went on to a decimal system would be called the "Royal".

There were many people who did not like this - the connection of Royalty with currency, and I think they thought that the name was slightly silly.

It had been the Government's intention from the outset to try to get a distinctive Australian name which would commend itself to a majority of people. However, the Australian names which had been suggested did not seem to have much support. These varied from "Kanga" to "Roo" to "Austral" to "Tasman", amidst many others.

None of these had more than minority support. There were quite a number who would have preferred to retain the use of the pound but the technical experts in these matters had suggested that there would be grave difficulties involved in having the old pound and the new decimal pound operating side by side. It was thought there would be too much confusion.

All these things were examined by the Government and it then chose the word "Royal".

The word "Dollar" had originally been rejected, not because there are any difficulties attached to it, but because there are many other countries who name their currency "Dollar" and therefore there would be nothing distinctive about it.

However, the reaction to the Government's first announcement clearly indicated that there were many more people supporting the "Dollar" than were supporting the "Royal". It was surprising how strongly many people thought about this matter.

Public opinion polls carried out since the Government's first decision indicated a strong and growing support for a change away from the "Royal" and the majority choice was clearly "Dollar".

The Government Parties had a discussion on this matter in Canberra and the Cabinet also had further discussions and last week the Treasurer announced the currency would be named "Dollar" for the major unit and cents for the minor unit.

This can be clearly called a victory for public opinion as expressed through the press and by letters to many Members of Parliament.
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Last week, the Parliament appointed a Select Committee of the Parliament to examine complaints sent by bark Petition from the Yirrkala natives of Arnhem Land to the Commonwealth Parliament. This is a result of action taken by Kim Beazley, the West Australian Labour Party Member for Fremantle, who introduced the matter into the Commonwealth Parliament.

The complaint lodged by the natives suggested that a company mining in the area had obtained rights to certain sections of a native Reserve which belonged to the Yirrkala tribe.

Mr. Beazley suggested again that in some of the States natives had been divested of their hunting grounds by companies that had been given mining rights by the States and he did not want the same thing to happen in Commonwealth territory.

The Yirrkala people are quite a remarkable aboriginal tribe. They live in a remote region, North-East of Arnhem Land, with strangely enough, a very good climate. Its average temperature is 15° to 18° below that of Darwin.

The Yirrkala people are known as artists, not just in parts of Australia but throughout the world. They paint on bark with aboriginal sticks which are specially treated. They only use native pigments in the traditional style.

Individual works of art by certain Yirrkala artists sell in Paris or New York for as much as 300 or 400 guineas, while Picasso wrote to a Yirrkala artist saying: "What I have been attempting to do all my life and not succeeded, you are doing!"

When I first heard this, it surprised me and, I think, many other Members of the House and I believe not many Australians would know that such a people existed in Arnhem Land.

There are schools in the community and Missions which operate effectively with Government support. Infant mortality has been reduced by degrees to European levels.

Mr. Beazley was at pains to point out that the Commonwealth has not neglected these people. However, since the leaders of the Yirrkala tribe had petitioned this Parliament, it was important not only that justice be done to the Yirrkala people but that the Yirrkala people understand that justice was being done. Therefore when Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, spoke after Mr. Beazley, he readily accepted the idea that a Select Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament be appointed to go to Yirrkala to examine the position at first hand.

The people appointed to the Select Committee will be visiting Yirrkala this week. They will speak to the Yirrkala people, listen to their complaints and investigate any grievances they may have.

The Parliament will await its report with interest.
One other matter occurred last week which is of significance as a landmark in the development of Australia.

The wall of the Canberra Dam was finally closed and, as I write, the Molonglo River is slowly but surely beginning to fill the flood plain that has, for fifty years, divided Canberra into two.

In the last few years, the development of Canberra as a National Capital has proceeded quite rapidly. This is important as a symbol of national growth and national unity.

International visitors no longer by-pass Canberra as they once used to, going to the capitals of Melbourne and Sydney instead.

A great many Australians visit Canberra each year during the school holidays, or at other times, to see what is being done at the Federal Capital. I have heard many of them speak of Canberra with real pride.

If those who have visited here during the last five years come again after the early part of next year they will notice a quite remarkable change because by then the Lake should be full, and Canberra as a capital will be given a shape and a form which will have real meaning. Incidentally, the Lake will provide a landmark which will make it easier for visitors who, in the past, have often found Canberra's roads difficult to follow.

If any of you are thinking of coming to Canberra for a holiday, with or without children, I hope you will get in touch with me beforehand because I could suggest some of the things which are very well worth seeing. If Parliament is sitting when you are in Canberra, I hope you will come to Parliament House so that I may show you Parliament in session and perhaps help to make a visit to the Federal Capital a pleasant one. I could always be found at these times by a 'phone call to Parliament House or by asking one of the Attendants at the door to find me.
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Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Dollar v Royal, Kirrkala tribe, Canberra lakes

Date:
6 October 1963

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File Description:
Dollar v Royal, Kirrkala tribe, Canberra lakes

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