PRESS STATEMENT:

MALCOLM FRASER:

April 26th, 1964

PORTLAND WOOL SALES

Portland, as a wool-selling centre, has once again been dragged into the headlines because of alleged action by the Australian Wool Board. Therefore, I welcomed the statement by Mr. Armstrong, Deputy Chairman of the Australian Wool Board, as it gives the green light to Portland as a wool-selling centre.

In particular we should note:

1. that Mr. Armstrong admitted the Board had had discussions with brokers concerning the adequacy of selling centres;

2. that he agreed that developmental plans for Portland should proceed; and

3. that he said that the companies concerned intended to go forward with their plans immediately.

For my own satisfaction I have verified this point and found it to be entirely correct.

For two or three weeks I have known some moves were afoot concerning selling centres, but I am convinced that resolute action by the Premier at this stage has destroyed any threat which might have developed to Portland.

Mr. Armstrong's statement in fact recognised that Portland will continue to grow as a marketing centre no matter what may be the Board's marketing recommendations in the future.

I cannot understand the Australian Wool Board's apparent challenge to the existence of decentralised marketing centres such as Goulburn, Albury and Albany and, until Mr. Armstrong's statement, to Portland. Any such move would be bound to fail. Sir William Gunn and the Australian Wool Board have won through on unpopular measures in the past because there has been basic political support from all parties for what the Board was doing. For example the Government substantially assisted the Board in its promotion plans by a heavy Commonwealth subsidy. If the Board developed a move that threatened decentralised selling centres it would lose support on the matter from all political parties and, I believe, from grower organisations. Such moves could only damage the Board and jeopardise the major work entrusted to it.
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Fraser, Malcolm

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