PRESS STATEMENT:

MAColm FRASER:

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WOOL INDUSTRY BALLOT

During this last week the debate has taken place in the Federal Parliament concerning the ballot for the Woolgrowers' referendum. I will deal with this in more detail in a later report but there is one aspect I want to mention today. Under the original proposal the ballot paper would be sent out to woolgrowers accompanied by a statement of the plan without any argument for or against. This provision has now been altered and the ballot paper will be sent out to each grower with a copy of the plan, together with a statement not exceeding 2,000 words from the Wool Board and from those groups that oppose the plan.

This decision should be to the advantage of those who support the plan. I knew some of my colleagues from other States who support the Board's proposals had been disturbed by the number of people approaching them who wanted to see both sides of the story. This request had come from many people who were basically sympathetic to the Board's proposals. Now both sides will be sent out with the ballot papers.

Over recent months, I, like many other people, have read statements that have been put forward by the Board, and I have read the criticisms and arguments of the opponents. The weakness of the arguments used by the opponents has been remarkable, and I believe this very weakness will help to persuade people that the Board's proposals are sound. For example in the publication put out by the three brokers opposing the Scheme price trends of Australia 64's were compared with New Zealand 46-50's. These people are meant to be brokers and anyone with the most elementary knowledge of wool would know that this kind of comparison of completely dissimilar types of wool makes utter nonsense. Many of their arguments can be dismissed in similar terms. During the debate in Parliament, I devoted some time to what could be called the major arguments against the Scheme.

My own view is quite plain. I hope the referendum will be carried. I hate to see anything done that would work against this end, and I hope that the wool industry and woolgrowers will welcome the fact that both cases are
now going to be put forward with the ballot paper and the plan. I believe, as a result, they will be able to make a firmer judgement in support of the plan because the two statements should reveal the strength of the Board's case and the weakness of the opposition.
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