PRESS RELEASE.

PORTLAND - HEATHMERE NEW AUTOMATIC EXCHANGES.

Malcolm Fraser has announced that the new automatic telephone exchange at Portland will be brought into service at Portland at 9.00 a.m. on Sunday, the 28th November, 1965. The automatic equipment is accommodated in a new brick building located in Tyers Street, Portland. It is equipped for 2,000 lines and will have 1,340 subscribers connected initially.

Simultaneously a new automatic exchange will be brought into operation at Heathmere replacing the existing Rural Automatic Exchange. Some Portland North subscribers will be transferred to the Heathmere automatic exchange and the balance will be transferred to the Portland automatic exchange.

Additional telephone channels are being provided in the area and these will enable the maximum amount of local call traffic to be dialled by Portland, Heathmere and Cape Bridgewater subscribers. Full dialling instructions for these and other calls will be contained in a special brochure to be issued to all subscribers prior to the changeover.

The equipment being introduced at Portland and Heathmere is of the modern crossbar type which has been adopted as the standard for installation at future automatic exchanges in Australia. It is designed to enable the telephone network to develop towards the ultimate objective of nation-wide dialling for all subscribers.

Some of the features of crossbar equipment are not readily apparent to subscribers and there are some new conditions in its operation on which it will be necessary for special advice to be given. In particular, it is important that subscribers first listen for dial tone, and then do not pause unnecessarily before, or during, dialling. There may be a pause of up to five seconds before the regular tone associated with the call is heard.

Coincident with the changeover to automatic working, "pip tone" signals will be introduced to indicate the end of each three minutes charge period on trunk calls connected by the operator instead of the customary query of "Three (six, nine) minutes, are you extending?" Calls requiring the assistance of an operator will be obtained by dialling 011.

The Department is arranging a customer relations programme so that Portland and Heathmere subscribers may obtain the best results from their new automatic telephone services. This will include a telephone call to each subscriber prior to and after changeover to offer any necessary assistance or advice.
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