PRESS STATEMENT

U.S. VISIT BY PRIME MINISTER: FRESH UNDERSTANDINGS

By Mr Malcolm Fraser, Minister for Education and Science and Member for Wannon

Fresh understandings in Australian-American relationships emerged from the recent visit of the Prime Minister, Mr Gorton to the United States.

The Prime Minister's discussions with President Nixon and top Administration advisers led to a re-statement of the spirit of the ties between our two countries.

These new bonds come at a time when we are entering a new era in our region – an era in which Australia has pledged to stand by her Asian neighbours in the face of the British military withdrawal by 1971.

This decision – to maintain military forces in the Malaysia-Singapore area and give additional aid – drew praise from the new American President.

The Prime Minister, in his report to Parliament on 15 May, said President Nixon had publicly and privately backed, supported and applauded the Australian decision.

He said the U.S. shared the Australian objectives of advancing development and security in the region and encouraging regional co-operation.

President Nixon's view had been that it was the purpose and determination of the U.S. to continue to participate in the Pacific and to strengthen the forces of freedom and progress in Asia.

The Prime Minister referred in Parliament to the ANZUS Treaty as perhaps the strongest guarantee of Australia's future security against physical attack.
Anzus, the security pact between Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. was signed in 1951.

The Prime Minister returned with major assurances from the newly installed President Nixon on the continuing force of the provisions of this Treaty.

President Nixon and his Administration, he said, had strongly underlined the importance and significance they attached to the Treaty.

The President had said in a public statement that Australia and the United States could both be proud of the contribution we were making as partners to the security and progress of the Pacific region.

Mr Gorton saw in the attitude adopted by the President a strong and unambiguous re-affirmation of the application of the Anzus Treaty.

He saw it as noteworthy that a President newly in office should re-affirm in such strong terms the importance of the Treaty.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the Treaty, which is so much to our advantage, also imposed obligations on Australia.

It provided that Australia should co-operate in the establishment of installations to assist our joint defence potential.

In this, Mr Gorton was referring to the communications station at North-West Cape and space facilities at Pine Gap as well as a station to be built at Woomera.

These bases contribute to the military effectiveness and protection of the Power on which the safety and independence of Australia might in the future depend.

The Prime Minister summed up: Our own security in a changing world depends to a very great extent on our relations and arrangements with the United States – and on the credibility of U.S. Power being maintained.