This is my first opportunity to speak to you since being elected Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and, hence, Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Parliament.

I am honoured to have been elected to this important position by my colleagues and I am also pleased for the recognition that it brings to our electorate of Wannon.

The task we have ahead is great and of vital importance for the way of life we cherish and which is now under challenge from the socialist philosophies of the Labor Government.

The Liberal Country Party coalition must regain the Government of this nation at the next elections.

This is the over-riding task facing all of us who value the Liberal belief of freedom for the individual, opportunities for all people, and concern for the disadvantaged in our society.

The Shadow Ministry will provide strong but constructive opposition to the Labor Government and whenever the next election occurs, we will present a strong alternative to the Labor Government. There is a distinct choice for the people of Australia between the crushing, all-powerful centralism so firmly entrenched in the Labor movement, and the Liberal alternative of freedom, opportunity and concern.

But, as I said, soon after taking up the position of Leader, I do not wish to speculate about the date of an early election.

As a general principle, I believe that the right to govern must be given to that Party which is returned to power with the majority in the Lower House, the House of Representatives. A majority in the Senate does not automatically bring with...
it a right to obstruct Government.

For this reason, the Labor Party *is correct in expecting that it will govern, unhindered by the Senate, for its full term - just as we would expect to govern when returned with a majority in the House of Representatives.*

This means that an early, or mid-term, election is unlikely unless Labor attempts to pass legislation of a most reprehensible nature.

It is ironic that in their preparations for an election, the Labor Party has announced a major campaign to solicit funds from business.

Not content with the forced campaign funds which come from the Trade Union movement, the Labor Party believes it is also entitled to support from private enterprise, that very sector which has been brought to its knees by the economic mismanagement of the Labor Government.

All of a sudden, we are told that the private enterprise sector of our economy is, after all, important and must be encouraged.

Make no mistake - this is merely a change of tactics, not a change of philosophy.

The Cairns/Whitlam philosophy is to cooperate with private enterprise to the minimum extent necessary to ensure Labor's survival.

Their purpose is still to bury private enterprise, but in the slightly longer term. The survival of many businesses meanwhile, large or small, is imperilled while inflation runs rampant, wages outstrip productivity by an enormous degree, and the
I appreciate greatly the support that has come to me as a result of my election as Leader, especially the support from the people in Wannon. Whatever my national responsibilities, my concern for the people of this electorate remains of paramount importance.
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Fraser, Malcolm

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