This week I would like to talk with you about the Australian Wool Commission's first week of operations....the Government's proposal for Child Care Centres....the emergency relief fund for woolgrowers and defence talks in New Zealand.

The results of the Australian Wool Commission's first week of operations throughout Australia have been heartening.

The Department of Primary Industry said that at the end of the week prices for wool at all centres showed an average increase of just under five per cent.

The market on the final day of the Melbourne wool sales closed at the highest point of the series with 97% of the offering being cleared to the trade.

The Melbourne catalogue represented all Victorian districts supplemented by consignments from the Riverina and the south-east of South Australia.

Main buyers were Japan and Western and Eastern Europe, followed by Britain with Australian mills and processors providing support on selected types.

Throughout Australia there was a greater air of confidence in the market in the sellers' favour with the Wool Commission operating at all major sales.

While obviously I cannot claim that the improved selling situation is completely the result of the Commission's activities I am sure that it has played a role in assisting the upward trend of market prices.

It should be kept in mind by all woolgrowers that if market improvement and stability is to be continued, the Commission will continue to need the fullest support of the grower.

The Commission must continue to work successfully in an effort to help strengthen the auction system and provide needed improvements in the administration of the Australian wool clip.
Another step in the Wool Commission's operations would be towards the preparation, handling and marketing of wool - an area where there has been less progress than with any other commodity in Australia.

A more dynamic approach to wool marketing is needed and I hope that the Commission will be able to tackle this problem in an energetic way.

For example, if trials being financed by the Government were successful the industry could move into sale by core sample on a big scale.

Sale by sample would cut the amount of handling of bales of wool which could be taken straight to a port facility.

The Wool Commission has the power to co-ordinate the introduction of such marketing measures.

This could lead to modernisation of many of the existing methods of handling and selling wool.

A united front by the wool industry is vital to ensure continued success for the Commission and future prosperity of the industry.

I would like to stress the significance of the Government's proposal for a scheme to assist in the establishment and operation of child care centres.

One of the greatest changes that has taken place in the Australian workforce in recent years has been the increasing number of married women in the workforce.

In the last decade the proportion of married women working has doubled from 9 to 18%.

The availability of adequate child care facilities for the children of working mothers is of real importance.
At present, the majority of working mothers have to arrange for their children to be looked after by relatives, friends and neighbours, or by other means which are often of a temporary nature.

A survey by the Bureau of Census and Statistics shows that many working mothers would prefer to place their children in child care centres if they were available.

There may be differences of opinion in the community on whether, and under what circumstances, mothers with young children should work.

The fact is that many mothers are choosing to work and there is an increasing tendency from them to do so.

Therefore, it is essential to ensure their children should receive the care and attention that will foster their fullest potential.

Because of this need the Prime Minister has announced that the Government will give high priority to the establishment of child care centres for children of pre-school age or for children of working— or sick—mothers.

This development will need to ensure that mothers who choose to work may do so free from worry about the quality of care their children will receive.

It is intended that there will be consultations with those organisations concerned to work out guidelines and standards covering the nature of the accommodation and equipment needed, staffing needs and the training of staff for child care centres.

The proposed scheme represents an important advance in social policy which will be of considerable help to working mothers, their young children, employers and the community at large.

Wool growers eligible for grants from the $30 million emergency relief fund established by the Government are urged to apply now as the closing date for applications is November 30th.
Only 12,000 applications have been received, although it is estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 growers are eligible.

About 80% of the growers who have applied for grants have been found eligible, and so far about 4,000 cheques have been posted.

About one-third of these cheques were for the maximum grant of $1,500.

The remainder are for interim payments, and the growers receiving these cheques will get a final payment when all applications have been dealt with.

I remind you that the scheme is based on a decline in wool income between the financial years 1968-69 and 1969-70.

If a grower feels that his 1968-69 wool income, because of drought, is not a fair basis for comparison with his 1969-70 income, he should submit information on earlier years, and this would be taken into account.

Any grower who believes he is eligible for assistance should apply, explaining any special circumstances.

I shall be in New Zealand until the end of the week and am scheduled to return to Australia on Friday, November 27.

If any of you have any problems that I can assist solve, my personal staff in Canberra will take note and refer them to me immediately on my return to Australia.

The purpose of my visit is to have talks with the New Zealand Ministers of Industries and Commerce and of Defence, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Defence Supply between Australia and New Zealand.
The talks are the first formal discussions between Ministers to review the progress achieved towards long term objectives in defence supply cooperation since the Memorandum was signed in September last year.

The development of all facets of cooperation in defence supply between Australia and New Zealand is essential and will contribute materially to the logistics support of their armed forces, as well as strengthening the capability of the Australian/New Zealand defence supply area.
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