The following information is based on material transmitted to the GATT secretariat by the Australian authorities.

On 22 February the Australian Minister for Trade, the Right Honourable John McEwen, announced changes in import licensing which go far towards the complete abolition of import restrictions. Imports currently worth approximately £A,800 million a year will now be exempt from import licensing. The items comprise some 90 per cent of Australia's present imports.

A small sector of Australia's imports will remain subject to licensing control. Commenting on this, Mr. McEwen said that statistics of import licences issued had been very useful in the administration of the Trade Agreement with Japan, particularly as regards those provisions which relate to its effects on Australian industry. The Australian Government, he said, considered that it could not deny itself, or industry, access to this important information until it could, after consultation with industry and commerce, devise suitable alternative arrangements. It was therefore proposed that, for the time being, some of the commodities of particular importance in trade with Japan would remain subject to licensing control. However, where the goods are subject to quota restrictions the quotas will, in general, be increased by 20 per cent over the previous level.

Mr. McEwen said that in November last year he had announced the Government's intention to licence timber on a replacement basis as from 1 April 1960 and to abolish licensing discrimination against dollar area motor vehicles as from 1 October 1960. It had been decided to adhere to that time-table but to exempt the goods from licensing as from the dates mentioned. The last element of discrimination against dollar area goods will disappear when North American vehicles are exempted from licensing, he said.

The following is a summary of the goods now freed from control and of goods still subject to control.
Goods freed from Control

Most types of machines and machinery, and parts, are no longer subject to import licensing, nor are motor vehicles from non-dollar sources (it is proposed to free motor vehicles from dollar sources on 1 October next). A wide range of consumer goods has also been liberalized. Timber imports from all sources will be exempted from licensing as from 1 April.

Goods still subject to Control

For goods still subject to control, a new four-month licensing period will begin on 1 March: valid import licences issued before 23 February for goods still so subject will be unaffected by the change. Quotas for these remaining goods will, in general, be increased by 20 per cent, but those for textiles remaining in Bank C.16 and Category B will be established for the licensing period at half actual imports in the calendar year 1959. All dollar "ceilings" have been removed.

Some 200 items remain subject to import licensing, amongst them those given below.

Goods remaining in Category A

Aluminium and alloy strip; watt-hour meters; tung oil; edible vegetable oils; sanitary earthenware; footwear; porcelainware; canned fish; oilseeds and nuts; commodities remaining in Bank C.16 (textiles and related goods for use in the manufacture of apparel, etc.).

Goods remaining in Category B

Textiles; including sheeting, tickings, linings, drills, furnishing fabrics, printed piece-goods, shirtings; buttons, ribbons, articles of apparel, umbrellas, towelling, travel and leather goods; toys.

Goods remaining on "Replacement" Licensing

Cotton and flax canvas and duck; plain clear sheet glass; lenses; elastic; certain cameras; projectors; slide viewers; flash units; hypodermic needles; dental units; coconut, palm, olive and castor oils.

Goods remaining on "Administrative" Licensing

Aluminium ingots and products; some non-ferrous alloy ingots and products; ball bearings; porcelain insulators; fuel oil; plywood veneers; polystyrene; polyethylene; PVC polymer; PVC synthetic resins; acetate rayon yarns; viscose tyre cord fabric; second-hand items and disposals machinery, equipment and parts.