AUSTRALIAN IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Statements submitted by the
Australian Government on Relaxation of Restrictions

The attached statements made on 11 September 1953 by the Australian Prime Minister and the Minister of Trade and Customs on the Government's decision further to relax the restrictions on imports from countries other than those in the dollar area and Japan have been received from that Government.

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

1. The Government has decided to make a further relaxation of the restrictions on imports from all countries except the dollar countries. The relaxation will come into effect on 1 October.

2. Full details will be announced by Senator O'Sullivan. The main lines of relaxation are, however, as follows:

   (a) Quotas for imports from the general group of countries (i.e. excluding the dollar countries and Japan) will be increased by a further 10 per cent of base year.

   (b) An extensive list of essential items at present under administrative control will be licensed without restriction, subject only to the production of evidence that the goods can be imported within one year from the date of issue of the licence.

   (c) The level of imports from Japan is to be raised in line with the increase in imports from other non-dollar countries.

3. These relaxations will in total allow an increase in imports of about £45 m. f.o.b. per annum.

4. The Treasurer referred in his Budget Speech to the great improvement in our balance of payments and the state of our international reserves that took place during 1952-53. It is in the light of this recovery,
and of our present favourable export prospects, that we have been able to undertake this further easing of import licensing controls. I think I might very well draw attention to the assurance we gave when import licensing controls were introduced early last year that they would be eased as and when our external finances should permit and also to the progressive easing which has been carried forward, step by step, over the past twelve months. We will again review export prospects early in the new year.

5. Two other decisions have also been made by the Government. One is that for the general run of licences, the quarterly licensing periods which have operated since the beginning of last year are to be superseded as from 1 October by 6 monthly periods. This will reduce the inconvenience to importers of frequent applications for import licences and in addition will give them greater flexibility in planning their requirements from overseas. This change of licensing period cannot be made as yet in relation to import licences for Japanese goods or, of course, dollar goods.

6. The other decision relates to the Tariff Board. The Government has decided to introduce a Bill which will provide for an increase in the membership of the Tariff Board from four to seven. This will permit the Board to divide into two groups of three which can meet concurrently under the general supervision of the Chairman. In addition the Government proposes to take all possible measures to streamline the procedures which the Tariff Board must follow.

7. The Government fully appreciates that Australian manufacturers in some fields have become apprehensive about overseas competition in our local markets. The process of gradual relaxation in our import restrictions which we have followed has given manufacturers time to approach the Tariff Board for higher duties if they believe this action is both necessary and justifiable. Nevertheless, it appears probable that, under present conditions, the number of applications to the Tariff Board for increased protection may rise. The proposals I have just referred to should enable the Board to deal expeditiously with any increase in the number of applications forwarded to it.

8. In regard to the import relaxations there are three further matters which I feel I should mention.

9. Firstly, we have been conscious and concerned that our recent imports from certain European countries, which are customarily large buyers of our products, especially wool, have been curtailed. This has been partly due to our import restrictions and partly to our anti-inflationary measures. However, these countries share fully in the relaxations of import restrictions, and the further easing of controls as from 1 October should substantially remove the hardships which have been involved.
10. Secondly, the Government has been concerned at the serious lack of balance which exists also in our trade with Japan. That country was the second largest buyer of our wool at last season's auctions. In 1952-53 our exports to Japan were valued at £84,000,000 whilst our imports were only £4,650,000. At the moment, Japan is acutely short of sterling. In our own interests it is obvious that this state of affairs cannot continue. It is for these reasons that the Government decided to raise the permitted level of imports from Japan in line with the increase in imports from other non-dollar countries.

11. Finally, I would like to mention gratefully the willing and helpful advice which the Members of the Consultative Committee on Import Policy have tendered to the Government.
STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR TRADE AND CUSTOMS

SENATOR NEIL O'SULLIVAN

1. The Minister for Trade and Customs, Senator Neil O'Sullivan, today released details of the latest relaxation of the restrictions on imports from countries other than the dollar area and Japan which was announced by the Prime Minister. These relaxations will operate from 1 October 1953.

2. The level of licensing of Category "A" goods has been increased from 80 per cent to 90 per cent of imports during the financial year 1950/51.

3. The basis of licensing of Category "B" goods has been increased from 40 per cent to 50 per cent of base year imports.

4. A number of items have been put on a "no-quota restriction" basis of licensing. These items, details of which follow, will now be licensed without restriction, upon application to Collectors of Customs, provided importers can show that the goods are available for importation within one year. Most of the goods in this group were formerly under "Administrative" control:

- Replacement parts for agricultural, horticultural, viticultural and dairying machinery and implements
- Replacement parts for motor cycles
- Replacement parts for motor vehicles
- Replacement parts for tractors
- Electrical insulating material
- Replacement parts for earth moving equipment
- Materials for manufacture of abrasive cloths and papers
- Navigation lamps and lanterns including parts therefor for use on ships
- Replacement parts for portable electric hand tools
- Replacement parts for air operated equipment and for air compressors
- Replacement parts for boot and show machines
- Replacement parts for diesel engines
- Replacement parts for printing machines and for paper and board making and working machines
- Replacement parts for textile and cordage machines (excluding card clothing, bobbins, cones, reels, spools and the like (wooden) as used in the spinning and weaving industries)
- Replacement parts for engines other than diesel engines
- Materials imported by and for use solely in industrial production by institutions for the blind
Articles for use in public and private practice of religion
Replacement parts (excluding movements) for repair of watches and clocks
Replacement parts for propelling pencils and for fountain pens other than ball point
Leaf tobacco
Coffee
Hog casings (other than natural)
Tea
Aluminium and nickel, viz.: blocks, cubes, ingots, pigs, scrap and granulated
Nickel angles, bars, pipes, plates, rods, sheets, strips, tees and tubes, not further manufactured than plated, polished or decorated
Nickel alloy angles, bars, channels, pipes, plates, rods, sheets, strips, tees and tubes not further manufactured than plated, polished or decorated; nickel alloy wire
Ball and roller bearings (except those for motor vehicles)
Differential and certain other meters
Furnace electrodes including nipples
Coils for sugar boilers
Steel balls for bearings
Titanium dioxide
Medicinal preparations
Unexposed film
Cinematograph films for general exhibition purposes, including trailers and stills
Manilla paper for use in the manufacture of braille books
Valves (other than the rubber sleeve type) for pneumatic tyres
Articles for deaf, dumb and blind
Blankets for printing machines; wire and paper makers' felts
Antiques for public institutions
Imported goods sent out of the Commonwealth for repair and subsequently reimported; goods from Papua and New Guinea sent to Australia for repair
Reimported goods
Bone sets and skeletons
Paintings
Pictorial illustrations, casts and models for teaching purposes
Machinery, scientific instruments, apparatus and materials for use in universities and public educational institutions, metal furniture for public hospitals, imported under certain conditions
Artificial limbs
Manganese and chrome ore
Coir and ramie fibre
Ferrous alloys
Unmanufactured cotton waste
Hides and skins (excluding undressed fur skins)
Fibres other than of jute and flax
Waste for caffeine
Rosin
Earths and clays
Animal hair

5. In commenting upon the fact that licences will in future be issued on a six monthly rather than a quarterly basis, the Minister remarked that this change should facilitate the ordering of goods by importers and enable them to attain a more satisfactory stock position.

6. Finally, Senator O'Sullivan stated that, owing to the generous increases which had been made to importers' quotas since the beginning of the year, generally the stage had been reached where quotas were adequate and there were no longer very good grounds for the issue of licences in excess of quotas upon what has been known as "hardship" considerations. The Minister remarked that, in the future, special licences in excess of quotas would be issued only in exceptional cases.