

multilateral effort aimed to urge the EEC to modify its agricultural system; b) the negotiation of international commodity agreements; and c) some form of association with the EEC. Regrettably, the prospects of worthwhile results being achieved from any of the three options were slight. Yet, the Australian government could not afford to 'be seen to be doing nothing to try to safeguard [Australia's interests], particularly as New Zealand ha[d] been very active in seeking to have accepted that it ha[d] a special position'. McEwen, therefore, argued that it was 'imperative that our public position, particularly as seen by the producers of those commodities likely to be most affected, be that we are doing what we can. It must be seen that we are doing everything possible to influence the enlargement of the Community in such a way as to cause the least damage to Australia'. McEwen acknowledged that British entry into the EEC would be less disruptive to Australian trade now than it would have been in the early 1960s. However, the effect on particular industries such as sugar, dairy and fruit would create very serious problems in the light of their current economic position.¹²

The Cabinet endorsed the recommendations contained in the submission. In particular, ministers agreed a) 'to confirm Australia's former attitude that it is for Britain to decide whether or not it joins the E.E.C. but that important Australian trade interests stand to be seriously damaged'; b) 'to make it clear that the enlargement of the Community should be done on the basis consistent with G.A.T.T.';¹³ c) 'to make it publicly clear that we are doing what we can to influence the U.K. and the Community in such a way as to cause the least damage to Australia'; and d) 'to explain Australia's position clearly in Brussels and London'.¹⁴

¹² NAA, A5619/1, C743 part 2, Cabinet Submission 258, 8.5.1970.

¹³ GATT was an international organisation established in 1947 to facilitate international trade by reducing tariffs and other barriers. Following the conclusion of the Uruguay Round in 1986, GATT was superseded by a new body called World Trade Organisation (WTO).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* The Cabinet also agreed to appoint a ministerial committee to consider matters arising from Britain's negotiations with the EEC. This committee was to include the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Ministers for External Affairs, Primary Industry, and Trade and Industry.

With this brief, McEwen visited Europe in July 1970. His expectations were not high. Yet, on his arrival in London on 6 July, he declared that although Britain was 'very, very keen to get into the Common Market', he expected the British to 'press quite hard for our interests, recognising that the relationship between Britain and Australia hasn't been by any means one-sided. I can remember a couple of wars'.¹⁵ Consummate a politician as he was, McEwen was clearly speaking to his domestic audience and, in particular, to farming communities scattered around Australia. McEwen's Country Party, whose electoral power-base was in the countryside, had traditionally championed rural interests. Privately, however, McEwen 'was resigned rather than demanding', as the British remarked.¹⁶ In talks with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, McEwen reminded Barber of the damage that Australian farm interests would suffer if Britain entered the EEC, and complained about the EEC's protectionist farm policies. In relation to safeguards for Australian farm exports, McEwen urged the British 'to put up a hard fight on the question of length of [the] transitional period'. More specifically, McEwen asked Barber to seek as long as a transitional period as possible for Australia.¹⁷ In reply, Barber recognised that entry would have a considerable effect on Australia's traditional exports to Britain. He stressed that 'obviously the length of the transitional stage was important', and pledged that 'the United Kingdom team would be seeking to achieve the longest transitional stage possible'.¹⁸ However, he reminded McEwen of the fact that the British government 'had to bear in mind the possible views of the E.E.C. Member States'.¹⁹

¹⁵ NAA, A10206/1, EHEC06, Press conference given by John McEwen at London airport, 7.7.1970.

¹⁶ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

¹⁷ NAA, A10206/1, EHEC06, Memcon, McEwen and Barber (London), 8.7.1970.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* Britain's brief as circulated to ministers on 30 June 1970 stated that 'the previous administration decided in 1967 that we should not aim at securing more for New Zealand (apart from the field of dairy products), Canada and Australia than the gradual application of tariffs and levies over whatever transitional periods are negotiated'. See Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

¹⁹ NAA, A10206/1, EHEC06, Memcon, McEwen and Barber (London), 8.7.1970.

This was indeed the crux of the matter. Although French attitudes had softened remarkably since de Gaulle's departure and now seemed favourable to British entry,²⁰ it was likely that France would exact a price for letting Britain in. From a French viewpoint, British entry had to be accomplished without damaging French interests. This was also true of the other EEC members. Despite having been traditionally sympathetic to British entry, the Five were also determined to make sure that British membership would not come about at their expense. The Heath government knew only too well that 'the Community would inevitably set the limits of negotiation with any aspirant for membership at a rather narrow span'. 'Over the years', Con O'Neill wrote in his report, 'we had to make a judgment of what was possible and what was not'.²¹ 'The experience of many years, including those of the negotiations, taught us, if it needed teaching, that the power of any country outside the Community to influence its decisions and actions is extremely limited'.²² It was for this reason that, in the opening statement on 30 June, Barber had expressed the wish that 'the negotiations [could] be kept short and confined to the essentials'. He had indicated that 'the list of questions which [the British government] wish to see covered in negotiations remain the same as those put forward by the previous British Government in July 1967'. He had added also that '[Britain's] main problems ... concern matters of agricultural policy; [its] contribution to Community budgetary expenditure; Commonwealth sugar exports; New Zealand's special problems; and certain other Commonwealth questions'.²³

The omission of any reference to Australia and its interests was not an oversight. It was yet another indication that, unlike New Zealand, no special safeguards for Australia

²⁰ In February 1970 French President Georges Pompidou told his American counterpart, Richard Nixon, that France wanted Britain to join the EEC. According to Kissinger, 'it was fear of a resurgent Germany, Pompidou averred, that had caused him to reverse de Gaulle's opposition to Britain's entry into Europe'. Kissinger, *White House*, p. 422.

²¹ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 18.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 356.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

were being considered by the British government.²⁴ As Barber had told McEwen in July, all Britain could probably do was to seek the longest transitional arrangements possible for Australia's agricultural produce. This assurance was again reiterated by Geoffrey Rippon – who, in the meantime, had taken over from Barber as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – in a letter to McEwen on 12 August.²⁵ Then, in mid-September 1970, during his talks with McEwen in Canberra, Rippon conveyed his government's view that 'Australia's trade interests in relation to British entry ... could best be protected by a long transition period'. He also said that 'Britain would always put Australia's case as high as it could'. In short, 'Britain would seek the longest possible transition period, which would provide time to put things right'.²⁶ It is important to note these pledges, as they became the reason for a public row between London and Canberra in the summer of 1971. On 14 October 1970, however, adhering to their undertakings, the British negotiating team in Brussels proposed a six-year period for agriculture. This proposal was not received well by the Six, and in particular, by France. Consequently, on 8 December, Rippon scaled down British demands and instead proposed a five-year period for agriculture.²⁷

What Australian interests were at stake in this round of UK-EEC negotiations and how had Australia's position changed in relation to the 1967 round? As briefly mentioned earlier, British entry would mainly affect Australia's farm exports. Wool and some minerals would in fact continue to enter the EEC market freely, as no quota or tariff restrictions were levied on these commodities.²⁸ Manufactured goods, while subjected to the CET, would in general benefit from the Community's liberal regime in manufacturing

²⁴ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, AHC London to DTI, cablegram 21318, 11.12.1970; Australian Embassy Brussels to DFA, cablegram 837, 19.12.1970.

²⁵ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 12, DFA to AHC London, cablegram 7926, 16.6.1971. On 25 July 1970 Barber have been moved to the Treasury to replace Ian Macleod as Chancellor of Exchequer.

²⁶ NAA, A10206/1, EHEC06, Memcon, Rippon and McEwen (Canberra), 15.9.1970.

²⁷ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 92.

²⁸ Other minerals would be exposed to the CET.

trade.²⁹ As far as the farm sector was concerned, Australia's problems centred on dairy products, fruit, sugar and meat (see Table 9.1).

While dependence of these commodities on the British market had lessened somewhat since the mid-1960s, diversification had been far from satisfactory. For some of them (dairy products, dried and canned fruit, meat and sugar) there was a limited scope for alternative markets. A further problem was represented by the fact that certain regions around Australia had, over the years, specialised in producing specific commodities for the British market. These regions would be hit severely as a result of British entry into the Community.³⁰ Overall, however, estimated trade losses were this time smaller than in 1967. According to DTI figures, total losses would be in the region of A\$86 million a year – that is, 2.7 per cent of Australia's total exports in 1968–69.³¹ In 1967 initial losses had been put at around A\$125 million a year.³² Figure 9.1 clearly shows the significant decline in Australian dependence on British markets for much Australian produce since the early 1960s.

Australia's declining trade with Britain made the Australian economy less vulnerable to British entry as McEwen himself had acknowledged in his submission to Cabinet. This was a significant change for Australia's approach to Britain's third bid. Yet, it was not the only one. Another important factor, which made this application different from the 1961–63 bid, was represented by the declining relevance of the Commonwealth connection in Australian eyes. As seen in Chapter 1, the Australian government had been seriously concerned in 1961 with the harmful effects of British entry on the cohesion of the Commonwealth as a political entity. This was no longer the case in 1970. In a policy

²⁹ In this category gluten, leather and coils would be particularly affected. See NAA, A5619, C743 part 2, Cabinet Submission 258, May 1970.

³⁰ For instance, the loss of the British market for dairy products would particularly hit Tasmania and Victoria. The disappearance of British outlets for dried fruit would have serious repercussions on the Murray region.

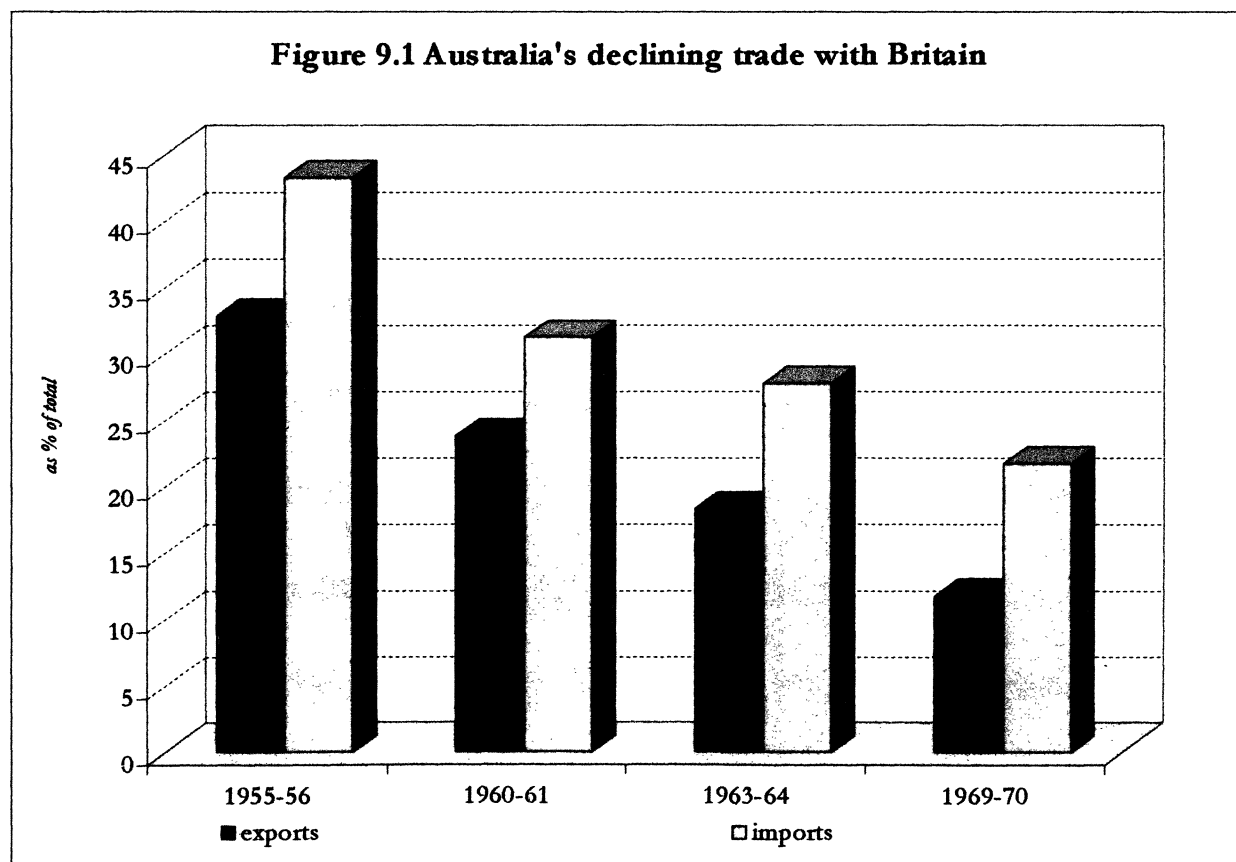
³¹ *Ibid.*

³² NAA, A10206, EHEC03, 'Britain and the E.E.C.', 15.11.1967. Initial losses were expected to rise to nearly A\$200 million after 1974, when the CSA expired and when the Community was likely to reach self-sufficiency over a large spectrum of farm commodities.

Table 9.1 Major Australian exports to Britain, 1968-69

	<i>Australian exports to the UK</i>		<i>Estimated loss</i>	
	<i>Value A\$ million</i>	<i>% of total exports</i>	<i>Value A\$ million</i>	<i>% of total exports</i>
Beef or veal	2.2	6.2%	1.1	31%
Butter	27.6	70%	27.6	70%
Apples	9.7	49%	3.6	18%
Apricots	1.0	58%	0.4	23%
Peaches	7.7	53%	3.8	26%
Pears	9.3	82%	4.6	41%
Fruit salad	2.5	47%	1.2	23%
Cheese	2.0	14%	2.0	14%
Eggs in liquid form	1.5	35%	1.5	35%
Wheat, unmilled	42.3	16%	9.1	4%
Pears, fresh	1.2	29%	0.4	10%
Sultanas	5.4	32%	2.7	16%
Cane sugar	39.2	34%	8.0	7%
Wine	1.2	35%	0.8	23%

Source: NAA, A5619, C743 part 2, Cabinet Submission 258, May 1970.



Source: NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 13.

planning paper of November 1970, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) claimed that 'Australia's interests [were] not vitally bound up with the Commonwealth'.³³ It argued that 'little advantage accrue[d] to Australia from its Commonwealth link'. On the one hand, Australia's ties with major Commonwealth countries such as Britain, New Zealand and Canada were no longer dependent on the Commonwealth link. On the other hand, Australia's relations with less important Commonwealth members were seen in Canberra as of little value since these countries felt 'able, by virtue of their Commonwealth status, to make political and economic demands on Australia which [were] not infrequently an embarrassment and a burden'. Furthermore, according to the DFA, 'very little value [would] be left of Commonwealth trade preferences after Britain's entry into the E.E.C.'. In short, the paper concluded, 'Australia could manage quite well without the Commonwealth'.³⁴

9.2 *Australia's policy towards the British application*

As with the previous bid, Australian policy towards Britain's 1970–72 application was mainly the responsibility of McEwen and his department, the DTI. McEwen was not only the longest serving Cabinet minister in the Gorton government, but also the most influential. Although his political career was about to come to an end – he would in fact step down in early 1971 – he remained in 1970 a powerful political figure in Canberra. He ensured that the formulation of Australian policy towards Britain's bid remained firmly in his hands.

³³ NAA, A1838/367, 899/1/2, 'Commonwealth: Its Prospects for Survival', DFA Policy Planning Paper CP/No. 4, 11.11.1970. In early November 1970 the DEA was renamed Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

³⁴ *Ibid.* However, as the paper also noted, 'we [the Australian government] should bear in mind that some of our particular friends in the Commonwealth ... see value in association; and that an organization which provides channels for formal and informal consultation with a wide range of countries on a wide range of issues should not be lightly dismissed'.

Australia's approach to the 1970-72 negotiations was clearly dictated by stringent political realities. As already mentioned, it was evident that, after two failed attempts, Britain was seriously determined to join the EEC. Australian policy-makers also knew by now that no Commonwealth interest would stand in the way of Britain's entry. More than that, it was felt within the DEA that there was an 'evident lack of sympathy on the British part' towards the Australian case.³⁵ The Australians were of course aware that Britain's negotiations with the Six would not be easy. Yet, they knew that this time, unlike in 1961-63 or 1967, France was probably prepared to let Britain in. It was the price the Six would exact that was yet to be seen. The only certainty was that Australian interests would lose in any hard-fought UK-EEC round of negotiations. Within the Community it was generally held that Australia was a wealthy country and, therefore, could withstand the impact of British entry. There was little sympathy for the Australian case, as McEwen found out during his talks with the European Commission in July 1970.³⁶ This lack of sympathy for Australia's position was a cry often heard among Australian policy-makers throughout the negotiating period. In December 1970, for instance, Minister for the Interior P.J. Nixon was told bluntly by the EEC Commissioner Deniau that 'the British and the EEC did not want to complicate the negotiations by discussing the interests of third countries while the negotiations were going on'.³⁷ Despite its various attempts between 1970 and 1972 to undertake 'simultaneous representations to a number of the numerous points of power or influence in the Communities', the Australian government failed to be heard.³⁸

Yet, not everyone in Canberra was prepared to lay all the blame on the Six. The DFA was particularly critical of 'Trade's aggressive attitude to the Community', claiming that it was 'no wonder there is little sympathy for us ... It's time we looked at [the] results

³⁵ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, Corkery to McMahon, 13.8.1970.

³⁶ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

³⁷ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, Nixon to McEwen, cablegram 842, 22.12.1970.

³⁸ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, Corkery to Minister, 13.8.1970.

of McEwen's approach'.³⁹ The department saw that 'Australia's interests [could] best be guarded in the long-term by making every endeavour, in association with the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and possibly Japan and South Africa, to encourage the enlarged Communities from becoming inward-looking'. According to the DFA, there were a number of ways of achieving this objective. For instance, Australia should try 'to influence the British, the Netherlands and Germany, to take care in their policies'. Second, the Australian government should 'continue pressures in the GATT for the upholding of its basic purposes and principles related to reducing trade barriers'. Third, were Australia to become a member, it should also use the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 'as a forum'.⁴⁰ In truth, the DTI was not opposed to this approach. In the submission to Cabinet of May 1970, McEwen had indeed referred to the need for a multilateral effort designed to urge the EEC to modify its agricultural system. However, he also recognised that the conditions for such an ambitious exercise barely existed. In particular, the American administration was not yet ready to take the lead and challenge the EEC head-on, despite growing pressure from its economic departments (Treasury, Commerce and Agriculture) to do so.⁴¹ But McEwen and his department were neither able nor willing to wait. If only for domestic reasons, they had to try to urge the EEC not only to look favourably on Australia's interests in the UK-EEC negotiations, but also to reform its protectionist farm regime.

³⁹ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, annotated comment to DFA to Australian Embassy Paris, cablegram 401, 27.1.1971.

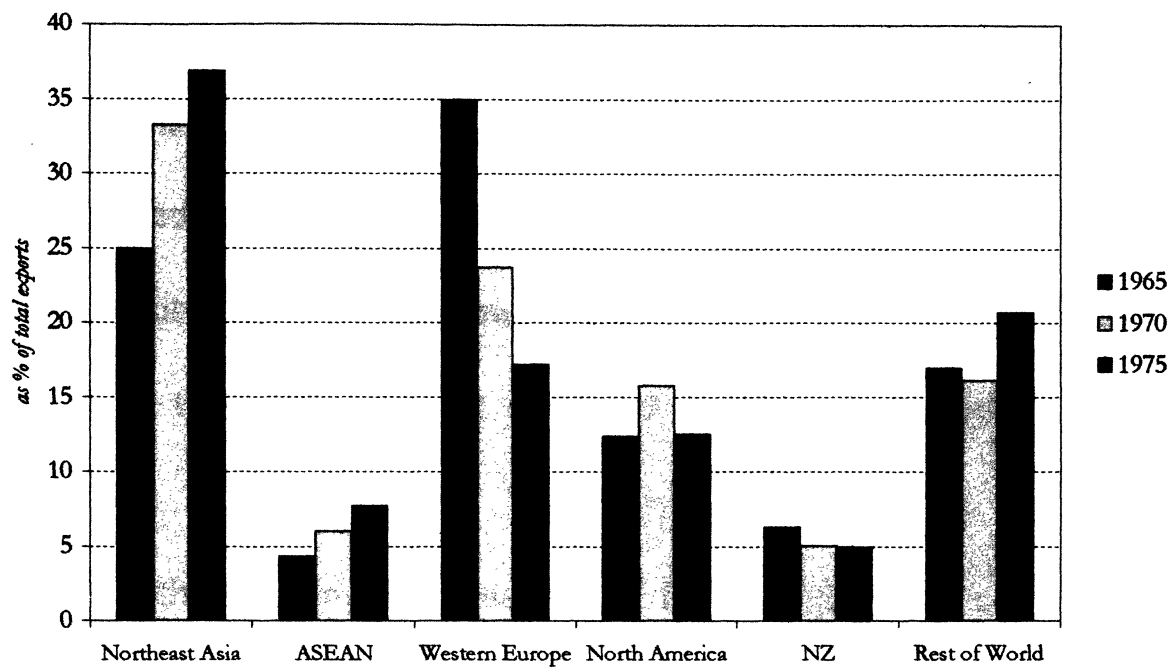
⁴⁰ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 11, Corkery to Minister, 13.8.1970. Australia joined the OECD in 1971. Australia's 'decision to become a full member reflected general interest in ... exerting influence in an organisation which had by that time established itself as the paramount western consultative forum. The timing of the decision was also prompted by a recognition that the imminent entry of the UK into the European Communities could make more difficult Australia's access to western centres of power and influence'. See http://www.dfat.gov.au/oecd/oecd_aust.html.

⁴¹ Kissinger, *White House*, pp. 425-429. In February 1970 President Nixon declared in his Foreign Policy Report that American 'support for the strengthening and broadening of the European Community ha[d] not diminished'. Yet, as Kissinger recalled, 'the economic agencies insisted that we use the forthcoming negotiations for British entry into the Community to conduct the battle' against the protectionist farm policies of the EEC.

Australia's handling of the EEC was not the only criticism to which the DTI became subject. In May 1970, McEwen had sought Cabinet approval for 'the development of a new dynamic relationship with Japan particularly [but by no means exclusively] in the trade and economic field'. This initiative was not accidental. It was intimately linked to the imminent opening of negotiations between Britain and the Six. As Britain turned to Europe, Australia had to look elsewhere for new markets and exporting opportunities. Thus, a reorientation of Australia's trade was no doubt an important reason behind McEwen's initiative, yet it was not the only reason. In fact, McEwen was also concerned that, as result of Britain's entry, Australia was facing the prospect of becoming more isolated in a world trade increasingly polarised around three major blocs (the EEC, North/Latin Americas and the Communist countries). Australia therefore needed 'a bold new formula for future co-operation fashioned to meet not only today's needs, but more importantly a framework capable of dynamic development'. As Japan was also 'apprehensive of the prospects she face[d] of being similarly excluded from the major trading blocs', Australia should explore the possibility of a closer relationship with Tokyo. McEwen's submission pointed out that 'Japan and the surrounding countries offer[ed] the best prospects for increasing Australian exports in the world, and [were] the only area where, by developing closer relations, [Australia could] hope that the doors [were] opening to [its markets]'.⁴² Between 1965 and 1970, Australian exports to Northeast Asia had grown significantly. By 1970, this region had already replaced Western Europe as Australia's major export destination (see Figure 9.2). As for Japan, this country had already established itself as Australia's largest exporting market (see Figure 9.3). The development of a new relationship with Japan as envisaged by McEwen was of course a major change in Australian foreign and trade policies. McMahon particularly noted that

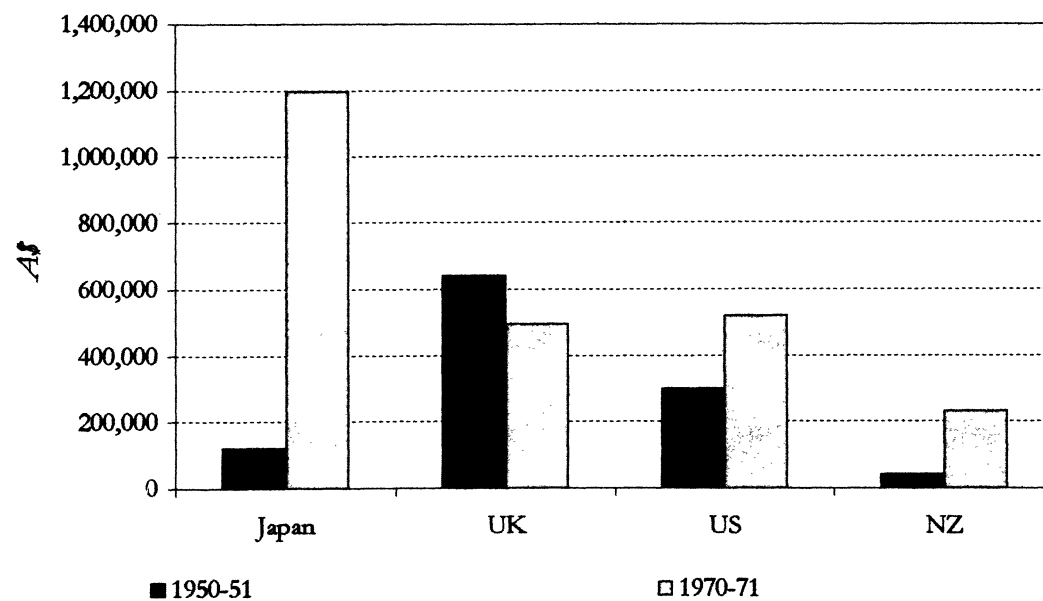
⁴² NAA, A5619/1, C742, Cabinet Submission 257, May 1970.

**Figure 9.2 Australia's changing patterns of trade
(exports to selected regions)**



Source: Ross Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy* (Canberra: AGPS, 1989), p. 72.

**Figure 9.3 Australia's largest exporting markets,
1951-71**



Historical data in Australian pounds (1901-1965) have been converted to Australian dollars at the rate of one pound to two dollars

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Directions of Trade Time Series: One Hundred Years of Trade* (Canberra: DFAT, 2002), p. 6.

'the submission contained concepts which if pursued would bring about significant changes in Australian attitudes' and he advocated caution.⁴³ The PMD went further and expressed the view that 'to go out and woo the Japanese' was not the sole option open to Australia as McEwen contended.⁴⁴ The problem was not that Australian policy-makers were lukewarm on reorienting Australia's external and trade policies. Rather, the problem was that strong sensitivities still remained – particularly within the Australian public – towards Japan. In the end, Cabinet accepted McEwen's proposal despite some reservations.⁴⁵

Thus, one of the outcomes for Australia of Britain's third bid was already in play, even before London began to negotiate in earnest with the EEC. The Gorton government was in fact considering deepening Australia's political and economic ties with Japan, accepting McEwen's view that a closer relationship with Tokyo would be the first step towards a much closer political and economic engagement with other countries in the region. As already noted, Australia had striven to diversify its trade by finding new markets ever since Britain's first application in 1961. Yet, this time Australia seemed even more determined to expand its politico-economic ties with its Asian neighbours. This would clearly represent a further step away from the traditional links with Britain, whose plans for entry into the EEC, in reality, left Australia with no other alternative. It is noteworthy that, in commending his policy initiative to the Cabinet, McEwen drew attention to the fact that British entry 'would mean the dismantling of the British Preferential System'. He advised the Cabinet to act without delay and revoke British preferences. This would allow the government to accord Japan greater trade advantages in the Australian market, in exchange for preferential treatment for Australian goods in Japan. McEwen argued that an early move 'would in itself make Australia a much more attractive

⁴³ NAA, A5619/1, C742, McMahon to Gorton, 13.5.1970.

⁴⁴ NAA, A5619/1, C742, Notes on Cabinet Submission 257, 11.5.1970.

⁴⁵ NAA, A5619/1, C742, Cabinet Decision 387, 18.5.1970.

market partner to Japan but our ability to capitalise on that will decrease progressively as the U.K. moves closer to taking its final decision on movement into Europe'.⁴⁶ It was indeed the end of an era.

9.3 *UK-EEC negotiations in 1971 and Australia's reactions*

Rarely does the end of an era occur without recriminations. Anglo-Australian relations proved no exception. As shall be seen in this section, Australia strongly criticised Britain's handling of the negotiations with the Six, and accused the British of completely disregarding Australian interests. The rift, which became public in the summer of 1971, did not last long. Despite its disappointment, Australia had to live with the fact that, as Con O'Neill put it, 'what mattered [to Britain] was to get into the Community, and thereby restore [its] position at the centre of European affairs ... The negotiations were concerned only with the means of achieving this objective at an acceptable price'.⁴⁷ The trouble was, of course, that what was acceptable to Britain was not optimal for Australia.

During the first half of 1971, Britain and the Six gradually moved towards a settlement of those agricultural issues that most concerned Australia: agricultural transition and sugar.⁴⁸ As discussed, the Gorton government had asked for the longest transitional periods possible and the British had accepted Australia's perceived need for this. The British government, for its part, believed that all Britain could realistically hope to achieve for agriculture was a transition period of five or six years and, owing to EEC opposition in December 1970, had to settle for a proposal for a five-year period. Then, in February 1971,

⁴⁶ NAA, A5619/1, C742, Cabinet Submission 257, May 1970.

⁴⁷ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

⁴⁸ During the 1970-72 negotiations, Britain and the EEC treated sugar as a separate issue. Sugar was a complex and politically sensitive matter. All Commonwealth sugar producers with the exception of Australia were developing countries. In general, they were heavily dependent on their sugar exports. Under the CSA, Britain was contractually bound to buy fixed quotas of sugar from CSA producers. Without proper safeguards, the economies of CSA countries would be badly affected by British entry. For a brief account on the sugar issue see *ibid.*, pp. 99-105.

Britain and the Community agreed provisionally to a programme of tariff transition: Britain would phase in the CET in five stages between 1973 and 1977. In early March, the EEC Council of Ministers decided that, as far as agricultural prices were concerned, the transitional period should be restricted to a four-year period.⁴⁹ More importantly, under pressure from the French, the Council also decided that Britain and the other candidate countries for entry should accept Community Preference in full from the beginning. This not only meant the full acceptance of the CAP and its mechanisms from entry, it also meant that Australia's traditional exports of butter, sugar, meat, cheese, eggs, wheat and flour would be practically shut out of the British market upon entry, due to the highly-protectionist CAP barriers.⁵⁰ Britain did not accept the Community's counter-proposals. On 21 April, the British negotiating team still insisted on the need for the full five years of transition in relation to agricultural prices. However, unknown to the Australians, British negotiators were discreetly signalling to the EEC that their government's 'position on Community Preference was no longer absolute'.⁵¹ The British clearly realised that the EEC position on this point was firm. They also felt that a partial breakthrough was needed if the Heath-Pompidou summit, which was scheduled for late May, were to help break the back of the negotiations.⁵² Hence, the British Cabinet decided on 6 May to accept the Community Preference in return for concessions by the Community on agricultural prices.⁵³ Consequently, at the UK-EEC ministerial meeting in Brussels on 11-13 May, Rippon informed the Six that Britain accepted the Community Preference in full from the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94. According to the EEC Council of Ministers agricultural prices would be phased in in five steps between 1973 and July 1977.

⁵⁰ Other important Australian farm commodities including lamb, canned and dried fruit were instead subject to the CET.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² As O'Neill recalls in his report, the British government 'felt it was of the greatest importance that, as a prelude to that [Heath-Pompidou] meeting the Ministerial meeting in Brussels of 11 and 12 May should make major progress'. *Ibid.*, pp. 95 and 335. Given the crucial role of France in the negotiations, Heath set great store on an Anglo-French summit as a means of paving the way to a successful application. It was in Britain's best interest that the summit did not take place at a time when the Brussels negotiations were still deadlocked.

⁵³ PRO, CAB 129/48, CM(71)24th meeting, 6.5.1971.

start. In return, the Six agreed to a provision for dealing with sudden agricultural problems.⁵⁴ This provision became best known as the 'safeguard clause', whereby 'if circumstances arose during the transitional period in which significant volumes of trade risked serious disruption, then the enlarged Community would deal with the position'.⁵⁵ They also accepted Britain's request for a full five-year period for agricultural prices. A final settlement on agricultural tariffs was also agreed upon: tariffs would be dismantled in five equal steps of 20 per cent beginning from January 1974.⁵⁶ Last but not least, Britain and the EEC reached a broad understanding on sugar, which contrary to previous British assurances to the Australian government, did not contemplate any transitional period for Australian sugar.⁵⁷

Britain's back-down on the Community Preference was received with bitterness in Canberra. The new Australian government, led by William McMahon, strongly criticised the British for failing to keep their word and to protect Australia's interests.⁵⁸ It drew particular attention to the deal struck by the UK and EEC negotiators on 11-13 May, and protested that this was in stark contrast with the assurances given by both Barber and Rippon in 1970. In a message to Heath on 15 June, McMahon complained that Australia 'had been led to believe that the problems which would be caused to [its] industries would

⁵⁴ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 95.

⁵⁵ This is the explanation of the 'safeguard clause' given by Rippon to the House of Commons following the Brussels Ministerial Meeting on 11-13 May 1971. Rippon quoted in NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 17, Anthony to DFA, cablegram 327, 4.6.1971. The Community's interpretation of the 'safeguard clause', as was put forward by the EEC Council of Ministers in the spring of 1971, reads as follows: 'The Community considers that, in respecting the provisions of articles 39 and 110 of the EEC Treaty it should be possible during the transition period, to face, when the time comes, the problems which can be posed for certain third countries and for certain concrete cases, which, as far as can be foreseen at present, will be limited to butter, sugar, bacon and certain fruit and vegetables. In this event, the institutions of the enlarged Community will have to take, as far as is necessary, the measures capable of giving solutions to these problems, in agreement with the principles and in the framework of the mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy'. See NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 12, Australian Embassy Brussels to DFA, cablegram 135, 4.3.1971.

⁵⁶ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 96.

⁵⁷ In 1970 Britain had informed Australia that the CSA would run until 31 December 1974. After that, Australia's arrangements under the CSA would be phased out during the remainder of the transitional period for agriculture. However, under the terms of the understanding reached in Brussels, no transitional period for Australian sugar was contemplated. The general assurance, whereby the enlarged Community would 'have as its firm purpose' the safeguarding of the interests of all Commonwealth sugar-producing countries, did not apply to Australia. See NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 12, Weemaes to Flood, 4.6.1971. See also Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 119.

be very much in the minds of the British negotiators and that those problems would be raised in the negotiations with a view to minimising the disturbance to [Australian] trade and ensuring that there would be a reasonable transitional period'. The Australian leader reminded his British counterpart that 'during his visit to Australia Mr Rippon [had] placed special emphasis on this concept of a transitional period and [had] said it was what he would be seeking in order to safeguard the Australian position'. McMahon pointed out that the UK-EEC deal on agriculture 'would not comply with the understanding the Australian Government was given of the type of transition period the British Government would be seeking'.⁵⁹ While couched in careful diplomatic language, the implication of McMahon's words could not be mistaken: they clearly suggested that the British had reneged on their previous assurances.

The photograph originally located here has been removed from
this version of the thesis for copyright reasons.

William McMahon

The tensions in the Anglo-Australian relationship increased further when McEwen's successor, Douglas Anthony, arrived in London in mid-June 1971.⁶⁰ According to Downer, still the Australian High Commissioner in London, Anthony 'expressed

⁵⁸ McMahon had replaced Gorton in March 1971.

⁵⁹ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 14, Bunting to Downer, cablegram 7856, 15.6.1971.

himself with restraint' during press and television interviews on arrival at Heathrow, but 'unhappily his mood soon changed'.⁶¹ In his talks with Rippon, Anthony maintained that in their desire to enter the EEC, the British had 'jettisoned the safeguards and transitional arrangements that they had earlier promised to Australia'.⁶² In reply, Rippon 'took the line that even if the British Government had, during April and May of this year, changed its policy on agricultural transitional arrangements, Australian officials had been informed of this change'. He suggested that 'if [the Australian government] had any complaint [it] should have raised it at that time'. Rippon ruled out the possibility of taking any further action with the EEC on Australia's behalf. He claimed that what Australia was seeking was not negotiable. In any case, Rippon argued, a generalised safeguard clause represented a better result for Australia.⁶³

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*This is how Thomas Garland renders Britain's final break-away from the Old Dominions.. Pompidou is portrayed as departing with Heath and Carr⁶⁴ for the 'EEC Ball' while leaving Cinderella (the Old Dominions) behind
(Daily Telegraph, 23.11.1971)*

⁶⁰ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 17, AHC London to DFA, cablegram 12150, 25.6.1971. Upon McEwen's retirement from parliament on 5 February 1971, Anthony inherited the leadership of the Country Party and replaced him as Minister of Trade and Industry.

⁶¹ Alexander Downer, *Six Prime Ministers* (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1982), p. 273.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 17, AHC London to DFA, cablegram 12150, 25.6.1971.

Rippon's claims were only partially true. He was certainly right to point out that, in the light of EEC intransigence on Community Preference, Australian requests were not negotiable. But, as far as the safeguard clause was concerned, it was doubtful that Britain really believed that it represented a better result. Until the 11-13 May Ministerial Meeting, the British had in fact insisted on 'firmer' and 'more specific' guarantees than a safeguard clause.⁶⁵ To the Australians this was irrelevant in any case: they did not believe it was a better result. More importantly, Rippon's claim that Canberra had been informed in advance of Britain's change of mind on Community Preference was simply not true.⁶⁶ Despatches from the Australian High Commission in London or the Australian Embassy in Brussels relayed no such news. This is not surprising. In the spring of 1971 the British were slowly coming to the conclusion that, for the sake of a breakthrough in the negotiations, they would have to scale down their requests on Community Preference. Fearing complications with their Commonwealth partners, they kept their cards very close to their chests and played the deception game. On 22 April, at a briefing meeting with Commonwealth representatives in Brussels, British officials still maintained that 'there would be serious political problems if the British market for products for which there were no other outlets were "brutally and abruptly" ended for the traditional suppliers'.⁶⁷ But, as noted, the British Cabinet agreed to accept the EEC's demands on Community Preference on 6 May. In strict confidentiality, the British informed the Six of their decision in advance to ensure that 'an approach on these lines would be acceptable to the [EEC] member countries and the Commission, and could lead to an agreement'.⁶⁸ Australians were of course left in the dark. Rippon's claims that the McMahon government had been kept

⁶⁴ Robert Carr was Employment Secretary under Heath.

⁶⁵ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 13, Australian Embassy Brussels to DFA, cablegram 215, 22.4.1971.

⁶⁶ See for example NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 15, Davies to Waller, 8.7.1971; NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 part 13, Australian Embassy Brussels to DFA, cablegram 141, 10.3.1971; Australian Embassy Brussels to DFA, cablegram 215, 22.4.1971.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 95.

informed were groundless. Unappeased and dissatisfied, Anthony left London resentful at the British sleight of hand. Before leaving the British capital, 'he made a bitter statement', which, according to Downer, 'angered British Ministers and upset many people sympathetic to the Australian cause'.⁶⁹

Unsurprisingly, the Heath government found the Australian reaction unpleasant. At a press conference Heath said that he 'regretted' Anthony's comments.⁷⁰ According to Con O'Neill, 'from May to July 1971 [Australia's] complaints and accusations rose to an embarrassing public crescendo'.⁷¹ Even before Anthony's arrival in London, the British had already voiced their annoyance with Australia. In early June, at a meeting with the foreign diplomatic corps, Rippon lashed out at Downer about Australia's accusations. According to the Australian High Commissioner, Rippon

embarked on a bitter tirade against Australia. We were a selfish country ... We cared nothing for Britain. 'It would matter nothing to you if this country sank under the North Sea', he shouted. We thought of our own interests and nothing else. Australia was a rich country – richer than Britain ... 'You cannot', he proceeded, 'continue to live on England's back'.⁷²

Inevitably, the controversy became public. On 30 June the *Financial Times* condemned the McMahon government's attempts 'to blame the British hardheartdness' for its own domestic political gains. The newspaper observed harshly that 'a strong Government could [have] handle[d] these undoubted difficulties with more finesse and dignity. Mr Macmahon's [sic] position [was] not strong. Yet, the very facts which he adduce[d] to defend his policies to his own electorate strengthen[ed] the European case that Australia taken as a whole ha[d] no need for special consideration'.⁷³ That the controversy left some ill feeling between Canberra and London was clear from the fact that in October the *Economist* still commented that 'bad feeling between countries often starts

⁶⁹ Downer, *Prime Ministers*, p. 273.

⁷⁰ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 15, AHC London to DFA, cablegram 13643, 20.7.1971.

⁷¹ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

⁷² Downer, *Prime Ministers*, pp. 271-272.

⁷³ 'Australia – 22 years of Coalition', *Financial Times*, 30.6.1971.

when politicians talk to their home constituencies through the medium of international negotiations'.⁷⁴ In January 1972, the Melbourne newspaper, *Age*, still referred to Anthony's 'tardy and tactless efforts in London' as one of the main reasons for Australia's failure to soften the blow inflicted by British entry.⁷⁵

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Douglas ('Doug') Anthony

The *Age*'s verdict was unfair for two reasons. First, the McMahon government's vociferous attitude in the summer of 1971 was not the cause of Britain's decision to accept Community Preference. Rather, it was its consequence. Second, Australian reactions had not been 'tardy'.⁷⁶ London had only informed Commonwealth countries of its new position on Community Preference on 13 May. Geoffrey Bolton has argued that McMahon and Anthony perhaps 'relied too much on the hope that Britain would hold out for concessions on behalf of Australia'.⁷⁷ But there was little such a hope in Canberra as has been noted earlier in this chapter. Moreover, from a diplomatic point of view, Australia had no other

⁷⁴ 'Time to bury the boomerang', *Economist*, 3.10.1971.

⁷⁵ *Age* quoted in Geoffrey Bolton, 'The United Kingdom' in W.J. Hudson (ed.), *Australia in World Affairs 1971-75* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 213.

⁷⁶ According to O'Neill, 'after this visit [McEwen's visit to London in July 1970], and after Mr Rippon's visit to Australia in September 1970, Australian interest in the negotiations seemed to flag. This was deceptive. But it is nevertheless true that the Australians seemed to take less trouble to present their case to us and to follow events in Brussels than many other Commonwealth Governments'. Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 302.

⁷⁷ Bolton, 'The United Kingdom', p. 213.

option than to rely on British assurances, as not to do so would have amounted to holding the British responsible for negotiating in bad faith.⁷⁸ Here again was a predicament already experienced by Australian policy-makers during the previous decade. As Britain felt it necessary to alter its own policies, Australia was left out in the cold, having not only to face a *fait accompli* but also to contemplate a series of worthless assurances.

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The end of an era: this is how Collette views Britain's entry into the EEC
(Australian, 25.6.1971)

Criticism of the Australian tactics, however, did not remain confined to the press or to Whitehall. The DFA in Canberra had followed the unfolding of Anthony's mission to Britain closely and had found Anthony's protests objectionable. The DFA had endorsed McMahon's message to Heath.⁷⁹ In fact, while it 'saw it as a futile exercise', it 'conceded that it was a game that had to be played' and 'the British would no doubt see it in that

⁷⁸ As D.H. McKay, Secretary (DTI), told an interdepartmental committee of officials on 9 July 1971, to have been more persistent with the British 'would have been a demonstration of a lack of faith in undertakings by British Ministers'. See NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 17, UK-EEC (DFA departmental note), undated (probably July 1971).

⁷⁹ Incidentally, the text of the message had been written by Anthony himself and then cleared interdepartmentally. See NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 14, Anthony to McMahon, cablegram 1482, 14.6.1971.

light'.⁸⁰ The DFA, however, objected to the vociferous line taken by Anthony. According to J.W.C. Cumes, First Assistant Secretary of the DFA's International Organisations Division, 'rather than complain about being let down on transitional arrangements, [Australia] should now seek to make the most of what we have got and, inter alia, to try hard to breathe life into the disruption provision'.⁸¹ Despite his criticism, Cumes did not disregard the fact that 'in respect of meaningful consultations, the British had again behaved abominably'. 'This', he added, 'had been part of the pattern established over the past ten years in the current and the earlier negotiations. However, we had to realise that the British wanted the negotiations to succeed and when they struck trouble – especially in matters affecting Australia – they were loath to allow this trouble to develop into a threat to the negotiations'. 'For the future', Cumes advised, 'it would be better to eschew recriminations'.⁸²

On his return to Australia, Anthony tried to put a positive gloss on the Anglo-Australian row. Despite giving the House of Representatives his account of the controversy, he declared that 'this must all be accepted as history' and added that Australia 'must now look to the future'.⁸³ He told the House that 'if the United Kingdom join[ed] the EEC then Australia [would] be on its own'. Yet, Anthony was quick to add that, in his view, Australia could 'stand on its own feet'.⁸⁴ He assured the House that the Australian government would take all possible steps to ensure that the safeguard clause would be given meaningful application.⁸⁵ He also stressed the need to place increasing reliance on ties with Japan and to ensure that 'this relationship is developed as much as possible'.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 14, Cumes to Flood, 15.6.1971.

⁸¹ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 14, Cumes to Flood, 5.7.1971.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Australia, HR, PD, vol. 73, 1971, pp. 354-356.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

⁸⁵ The final text of the safeguard clause as incorporated in the Treaty of Accession reads as follows: 'In complying with the provisions of articles 39 and 110 of the EEC Treaty it should be possible during the transitional period to meet, when the time comes, the problems which may arise for certain third countries and in certain specific cases. If such problems do arise, the institutions of the Community will examine specific cases in the light of all the relevant factors in a given situation, just as the institutions of the

In the end, Australian discontent faded away. Gradually, despite the disappointment, Canberra had no other option than to accept the minimal terms negotiated by Britain to safeguard Australian interests. After all, the British back-down on the Community Preference had enabled McMahon to blame the British for the unsatisfactory terms which Australia had obtained. In so doing, his government had been able to justify its action to the Australian public. In purely political terms, McMahon had at least defused a potentially damaging domestic issue. Therefore, in mid-November 1971, during his talks with British ministers in London, McMahon set Australian complaints to one side. Not only did he thank Rippon 'for his efforts on Australia's behalf', but also expressed his wish that 'the Anglo-Australian relationship could be effectively maintained'.⁸⁷ The British attitude appeared equally forthcoming. British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Douglas-Home told McMahon that Britain intended 'to keep the most intimate relationship it could with Australia'.⁸⁸ In claiming that British intentions were 'good' 'and the machinery to give effect to those intentions [was] in a good order', Douglas-Home, was emphatic that Britain would do its 'absolute damnest to help', and represent Australia's interests within the EEC.⁸⁹ Yet, as Australia's future awkward dealings with the Community were to prove, there was nothing much Britain could do to represent Australian interests in Brussels.⁹⁰

Community as originally constituted have done hitherto in similar cases, and during the transitional period they will, insofar as is necessary, have to take such measures as are likely to solve these problems, in the spirit of the principles of the Common Agricultural Policy and in the framework of the machinery of that policy'. See NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/2 part 20, AHC London to DFA, cablegram 900, 19.1.1972.

⁸⁶ Australia, HR, *PD*, vol. 73, 1971, p. 357.

⁸⁷ NAA, A1838/2, 727/1/3 part 3, AHC London to DFA and PMC, cablegram 20753, 13.11.1971.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ For an examination of Australia's difficult relations with the EEC following British entry see Andrea Benvenuti, *Australian-European Negotiations on Agriculture: A Study in Economic Diplomacy 1983-93* (MA Thesis, Monash University, 1997) and 'Australia's Battle Against the Common Agricultural Policy: The Fraser Government's Trade Diplomacy and the European Community', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1999, pp. 181-196.

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Heath signs the Treaty of Accession in January 1972.

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Edward Gough Whitlam

In the ensuing months, the Heath government worked hard to smooth Britain's path into the Community. Following Heath's successful summit with Pompidou, the road was paved for a positive conclusion of Britain's bid. O'Neill recalled in his report that 'from the Heath-Pompidou meeting onwards the final outcome was certain'.⁹¹ Although settlement was still pending on a number of important issues such as fisheries, political agreement at the highest level between the governments of France and Britain ensured that

that EEC-UK negotiations could now come to an end. This duly happened on 22 January 1972 when Heath signed the Treaty of Accession in Brussels. Britain entered the EEC in January 1973. In September 1972 the McMahon government announced two important measures: the abolition of preferences granted to British imports and the termination of the UK-Australia Trade Agreement (UKATA) as from 1 February 1973.⁹²

The 'EEC saga', which had marred Anglo-Australian relations for a decade, had finally come to a close, and, with it, an era of intimate Anglo-Australian relations. In December 1972 a new Australian government, led by the leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), Edward Gough Whitlam, came to power. Between 1973 and 1975 Whitlam introduced the *Royal Styles and Title Act*, which changed the Queen's title to 'Queen of Australia', abolished British royal honours and substituted 'God Save the Queen' with 'Advance Australia Fair' as the country's national anthem.⁹³ The 'British subject' caption also disappeared from Australian passports. While symbolic, these changes emphasised, among other things, the impact that Britain's reorientation towards Europe had had on Anglo-Australian relations. Although cultural ties between Australia and Britain were to remain strong, and relations between the two governments cordial, Britain's relevance in Australia's political life as well as in its economic and strategic policy-making had greatly diminished. Whitlam's reforms, therefore, served to bring a largely outdated constitutional symbolism in tune with the changed reality of Anglo-Australian relations.

⁹¹ Hannay (ed.), *Entry*, p. 330.

⁹² Bolton, 'The United Kingdom', p. 215.

⁹³ He would also try to eliminate legal appeals to the Judicial Committee of Privy Council in London, but would run into constitutional difficulties. See T.B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788*, 2nd edn, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1991), p. 331.

Conclusion

‘Australia is still (with New Zealand) Britain’s best friend in the world. The bond of attachment runs deep’. So British High Commission officials in Canberra wrote in a steering brief dated March 1962. Yet, as they were ready to admit, Anglo-Australian relations had begun to change fundamentally during the previous two years and were bound to change further. The bonds of Empire, they noted, were becoming ‘increasingly a matter for the historian’. In their view, change had been accelerated by developments of great Commonwealth significance, which included the Commonwealth’s transformation into a multi-racial body with an increasing Afro-Asian membership and new restrictions to Britain’s immigration law. Yet, the factor most likely to undermine Anglo-Australian relations was Britain’s bid to join the EEC which had been launched in July 1961. As British officials observed, there was a widespread fear in Australia of the consequences of Britain’s entry. Apart from economic damage, Australians were concerned that Britain’s role as a European power would increasingly affect its policies outside Europe and that these would not necessarily accord with Australian interests. Unsettling as it was, the British bid was not the only disturbing aspect of Britain’s closer engagement with Europe. There were also politico-strategic factors which fuelled Australian apprehension. ‘As we withdraw into Europe’, British officials remarked, ‘British power, interests and influence in South-East Asia are seen as waning rapidly’. Predictably, the contraction of Britain’s

politico-military presence in the region was viewed in Canberra with anxiety at a time of growing instability in Southeast Asia.¹

These observations provide an interesting insight into the changing nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship in the early 1960s. They also foreshadow the emergence of a major conflict of interest between Australia and Britain as policy-makers in London reoriented their country's external policies towards the European continent. As this thesis has demonstrated by relying extensively on newly released material from Australian and British archives, Britain's turn to Europe did indeed bring about a serious clash of interests between the once closest of allies. The radical redefinition of Britain's post-imperial role together with its reorientation towards Europe did not accord, nor could accord, with Australian political, economic and strategic interests in the Southeast Asian region. Unlike in previous decades, Anglo-Australian contrasts could not be reconciled in reaffirmations of Commonwealth unity or imperial kinship and sentiment. This time, the scale of the conflict was of a completely different nature. As a result, the close and unique relationship, which had hitherto existed between Australia and Britain as seen in Chapter 1, did not withstand the strains imposed by such a clash of interest.

As noted in Chapter 2, Macmillan's decision to seek EEC membership in 1961 dealt the first blow to the once intimate Anglo-Australian relationship. British plans to join the Community came as a shock to Australian policy-makers given the fact that, during the 1950s, they had accepted in good faith British reassurances that Australian and Commonwealth interests would not be sacrificed on the altar of British entry into the EEC. Understandably, Macmillan's change of heart was a source of great anxiety to the Menzies government. From an Australian viewpoint, British entry would irreparably undermine Britain's political ties with Australia and the Commonwealth. It would also have negative

¹ PRO, DO 169/2, Visit of the High Commissioner to London, 1962. Steering Brief: Anglo-Australian Relations, March 1962.

economic implications for the Australian economy as British entry would put at risk Australian exports to the British market.

In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3, entry would have important strategic consequences for Australia's security since Britain's consequent European focus would weaken its determination to maintain a politico-military role in Southeast Asia where Australia's main strategic interests lay. The Australian response to the 'Common Market' crisis was initially vociferous and rigid. The Menzies government demanded that all Australian trade interests should be protected, and in urging the British to safeguard Australian interests, it sought to play the 'sentiment card'. In addition, as Menzies himself reminded the British repeatedly, Britain should carefully consider the potential damage that entry would inflict on the unity of Commonwealth. The Australians also sought to enlist the diplomatic support of the United States in their efforts to have Britain rethink its proposed move. However, as the negotiations in Brussels wore on between the British and the Six, it became evident that Australian and British interests were too far apart to be reconciled. Resigned to the fact that London would allow no Commonwealth interest to stand in the way of British entry, the Menzies government adopted a much softer approach. In the end, the Macmillan bid failed in January 1963 when France vetoed the British application. Despite the French veto, the 1961–63 'Common Market crisis' left an indelible mark on Anglo-Australian relations. It wrecked Australia's strongly-held belief that differences between British nations could be reconciled in the name of a strong Commonwealth loyalty.

Despite the fact that the French veto set the question of British entry at rest momentarily, Australian policy-makers remained persuaded that Britain would be increasingly drawn into a European orbit. However, Britain's reorientation towards Europe did not follow a simple and clear-cut path. For example, French resistance to British entry ensured that the process drew out until the end of the decade, thereby making Britain's

entry appear an unattainable objective. Moreover, Britain's increasing engagement with the EEC soon overlapped with its attempts to reassess its global and imperial role. This became particularly evident in the painful process of military retrenchment into Europe undertaken by the Wilson government in the second half of the 1960s. In attempting to disengage from its burdensome politico-military commitments in Asia, Britain set itself on a collision course with Australia. Britain's military withdrawal from Southeast Asia thus introduced a further element of discord between London and Canberra only a few years after the acrimony surrounding the 1961–63 application and inflicted another significant blow to the Anglo-Australian relationship.

The strategic implications for Australia of Britain's withdrawal from east of Suez and its resulting retrenchment into Europe have been examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Chapter 3 provided the background against which the British withdrawal and Australia's response to it took place. This chapter has shown that, notwithstanding the decline in British power in the Far East, Britain's politico-military presence in Southeast Asia continued to play an important role in Australia's foreign and defence policy-making in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Throughout the period, as the chapter has also argued, the Australian government remained seriously concerned about Britain's long-term willingness and ability to remain in Southeast Asia. In the early 1960s Australian concerns heightened as a result of Britain's plans to join the EEC. The question of British entry, which, until then, had been absent from Australian politico-strategic calculations, emerged with force in 1961 and was destined to remain a distressing concern for most of the decade.

Chapter 4 examined Britain's early attempts to disengage from Southeast Asia and Australia's concomitant response. This chapter has shown that, as the British resolve to remain east of Suez dwindled in 1965, the Wilson government contemplated plans for a much reduced military presence in Southeast Asia. Although London was cautious not to disclose its plans, the Australian government discerned an appreciable change of emphasis

in British thinking and, as a result, became nervous of British intentions. Canberra was concerned that Britain, despite its claims to the contrary, was seeking a way out of Southeast Asia at the time when Australia was deepening its involvement in regional crises. In early 1965 the Australian government had in fact agreed to deploy troops in Vietnam and Borneo. Canberra was worried that the British disengagement would undermine Australia's forward defence strategy, leave a political and military vacuum in an unstable region and lead to an American withdrawal from Indochina. Under intense lobbying from Australia, the United States, and New Zealand, London was momentarily compelled to shelve its plans. Throughout 1966 Australia and the other ANZUS countries repeatedly attempted to toughen Britain's resolve to remain engaged in Southeast Asia and, for a time, it appeared that the ANZUS pressure might result in some success. In the end, it failed either to gain an unequivocal British commitment to the defence of Southeast Asia, or to secure British support for a common strategic concept for the area. The gap between Australian and British politico-strategic interests had widened. Inevitably, Australian policy towards Britain hardened. As its suspicions that Britain planned to withdraw from the region increased, Canberra became less forthcoming fearing that a co-operative attitude towards Britain would in the end facilitate, rather than prevent, British disengagement. The chapter has also shown how the re-emergence of 'the EEC question' in British policy-making played a large role in reinforcing Australian suspicions about British intentions for withdrawal.

Chapter 5 explained how Canberra reacted to the growing disinclination of the Wilson government to maintain a military presence in Malaysia and Singapore during the second half of 1966. Thereafter, it examined the manner in which, after April 1967, the Australian government dealt with, and responded to, the British decision to withdraw from the region. In relation to the first period, this chapter argued that Australian policy-makers pursued a policy whose aim was to urge the British government to agree to a common

strategic concept for Southeast Asia. Canberra hoped that this would get the British to commit to the security of the region. Australian efforts, however, did not succeed as London had no desire to be tied down to a long-term regional commitment. On the contrary, its objective remained a gradual disengagement from Southeast Asia. Partly, but not exclusively, in response to the growing uncertainty surrounding British long-term plans, the Holt government sought closer alignment with the United States. This chapter also explained how the Wilson government reached the decision to withdraw from east of Suez, between the autumn of 1966 and the spring of 1967. The news that the British were considering withdrawal from Southeast Asia by the mid-1970s reached Australia in late April. This basically coincided with the announcement of the British decision to seek EEC entry on 2 May 1967. Both the withdrawal and the EEC application were serious blows to Australia and were seen in Canberra as logically linked together, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Both decisions reinforced the Australian impression that Britain was reorienting its external policies to Europe and that, in so doing, it had little regard for Australian concerns. In dealing with these two major crises, the Holt government gave priority to the most urgent question: the withdrawal from the region. As part of its tactics, Australia also sought to secure the diplomatic support of the United States and other Commonwealth allies. In his talks with Wilson in mid-June, Holt emphasised the importance to Britain of a continuing British presence in Southeast Asia. In British eyes, however, Southeast Asia was a growing burden and Holt found little agreement with his arguments from his counterpart. Australian and British interests and aims were clearly at variance. In the end, in July 1967, the British Cabinet confirmed its decision to withdraw by the mid-1970s. In January 1968, the date of withdrawal was brought forward to the end of 1971. After constant reassurances that Britain would remain in Southeast Asia, the British withdrawal upset the Australian government deeply. Yet, its reaction was mitigated by the fact that Canberra still required British co-operation throughout the rundown phase to ease the

Australian task of maintaining its own military presence in Malaysia and Singapore. In this context, this chapter has also argued that, as a result of the British withdrawal, the Australian government began to rethink its defence role in Southeast Asia. In so doing, it laid the foundations for Australia's closer engagement with its neighbours and for a more prominent role in the region.

Chapters 6 and 7 evaluated the impact of Britain's second application to the EEC on Anglo-Australian relations. While not as far-reaching as the 1961–63 bid, the second application nonetheless added further strain to Anglo-Australian relations. Apart from the inevitable economic damage for Australia which would still result from entry, the application was now also regarded as being likely to weaken Britain's resolve to maintain its politico-military role in Southeast Asia. In particular, Chapter 7 showed how Australian policy-makers became persuaded in mid-1967 that Wilson's 'approach to Europe' had paved the way for the almost concomitant decision to withdraw from east of Suez. As discussed in Chapter 5, the withdrawal, combined with the decision to seek EEC entry, was perceived in Australian official circles as irrefutable evidence that London was reorienting its external policies towards Europe. In this context, Chapters 6 and 7 also revealed the extent to which the Wilson government was prepared to ignore Australian interests in order to secure Britain's foreign policy objectives. The 1967 application sent a clear and powerful message that, in pursuing Britain's European objectives, London regarded Australian interests as expendable. While Macmillan had to some extent tried to reconcile the divergent interests of Britain and Australia at the time of the 1961–63 bid, such consideration was of little interest to Wilson. Yet, the response of the Holt government was low-key and non-committal. A number of factors played a role in determining the Australian attitude. A constant factor throughout the 1966–67 period was the continuing French opposition to British entry which made the outcome of the Wilson bid doubtful. Another factor was the Australian concern not to expose itself to British pressure for trade

compensation if anything Australia did could be construed as an attempt to thwart Britain's way into the EEC. A third factor was Canberra's desire in 1967 to defer informing the Australian public on the grim outlook for Australian farm exports in the event of Britain's entry into the EEC. Last but not least, the Holt government was also concerned that, as its timing coincided with the British defence review, Wilson's approach to Europe would undermine Britain's willingness to remain east of Suez. In this context, the Holt government even canvassed the possibility of giving Britain some trade benefits if these could help strengthen the latter's resolve to remain in Southeast Asia. It was also cautious in its other dealings with the British government to avoid confrontation on the EEC question, fearing this could drive a wedge between Australia and Britain at a time when British goodwill was still needed. In the event, while the Wilson bid collapsed, its impact instead was lasting. The application remained on the table and would be resumed by the Heath Conservative government in 1970. The lessons of the 1967 bid left Canberra in no doubt about Britain's commitment to joining the EEC and under no illusion that the British would jeopardise their chances of success in order to protect Australian interests. Nonetheless, Canberra did not attempt to sabotage the British bid as it recognised that such a course of action would only prove counterproductive and ultimately futile.

By the late 1960s, therefore, Anglo-Australian relations had changed profoundly as a result of Britain's turn to Europe. On an economic level, despite the fact that the imperial preference system had not yet been discarded, Australian dependence on the British market had lessened as a result of the country's efforts to diversify its external trade towards the Asia-Pacific region. At the strategic level, the British security blanket on which Australia had relied for several decades was soon to disappear as a consequence of the British decision to withdraw from Southeast Asia by 1971. At the political level, relations between Canberra and London had lost most of the 'instinctive intimacy, warmth, generosity and genuine appreciation of each other's position' which had characterised Anglo-Australian

relations until the 1960s.² However, despite these far-reaching changes, Britain's shift to Europe was still to be fully accomplished since London had not as yet managed to join the EEC. It was only with British entry in January 1973 that the change in Anglo-Australian relations was fully realised.

Before turning to Britain's third application and its implications for Australia, this thesis dealt with the decision of the Heath government in 1971 to deploy a token military force in Southeast Asia under the aegis of the FPDA. Chapter 8 examined Anglo-Australian defence relations in the aftermath of the British decision to withdraw from Malaysia and Singapore, thereby bringing to a conclusion a controversial phase in the bilateral relationship. It argued that, far from being a complete reversal of previous Labour policy, the successful negotiation of the FPDA in 1971 terminated the open-ended commitment to the defence of the Malaysian region which Britain had made under AMDA. In no way did the decision of the Conservative government to deploy a token presence in Southeast Asia reverse the already European-orientated defence policy of Britain. In this context, Chapter 8 also contended that the Australian government was initially rather cautious in its response. Far from endorsing British proposals unconditionally, Canberra was careful that a continuing British military presence should accord with a more independent formulation of Australia's own regional interests. In this respect, such an Australian attitude was an indication of how Australian thinking had evolved since Wilson's initial decision to pull out of Malaysia and Singapore. At the beginning of 1970s, in fact, Australian dependence on British military power was very much a relic of the past.

Chapter 9 examined Britain's third application for EEC entry and argued that, while it was far from having the same impact as the previous two applications, it nonetheless had important symbolic and practical implications. At a practical level, British entry ended the imperial preference system which had regulated trade between Australia

² *Ibid.*

and Britain for four decades. Although the disappearance of imperial preferences was expected to be less disruptive to Australian trade in the early 1970s than a decade earlier, a number of Australian commodities still stood to be damaged by the British entry. At a more symbolic level, entry finally sealed Britain's European destiny and, in Australian eyes, represented a formal departure from the close ties of empire. Subsequently, following the British signature of the Treaty of Accession in January 1972, the Australian government introduced a number of symbolic reforms which acknowledged the changed reality of Anglo-Australian relations. Moreover, this chapter argued that since the Australian government had little hope of seeing its trade interests properly safeguarded by Britain, its policy centred on demands for transitional arrangements in order to protect Australian interests. To this end, while urging the British to protect its interests, Canberra also considered steps to deepen its political and economic ties with Japan. A closer relationship with Asia's emerging economic power was seen in Canberra as the first step towards a much closer political and economic engagement with other countries in the region. Thus, as Britain was about to enter the EEC, Australia sought to reorient its own external and economic policies towards the Asian region.

British entry into the Community in January 1973 marked the end of an era in Anglo-Australian relations. By then, the bonds of empire, which had characterised relations between Australia and Britain until the late 1950s had indeed become a matter for the historian. Gone were the imperial preferences which had underpinned trade between Australia and Britain. Following British entry, Australia's trade with Britain further declined in relative terms. In the period 1978–82 Australian exports to Britain averaged 4 per cent while imports from Britain amounted to 9 per cent.³ Despite Heath's decision to deploy a token military force in Malaysia and Singapore under FPDA, Anglo-Australian

³ David Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing the North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1: 1901 to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 427.

defence relations, as described in Chapters 1 and 3, changed beyond recognition. Gone was Australia's dependence on British military power. Gone also were the intimate political relations between the two governments. Despite continuing friendship, the relationship lost the intimacy which had characterised it before the first bid. Furthermore, the importance of the Commonwealth network was much diminished. It ceased to be the valuable forum in which members sought to co-ordinate policies of mutual interest. The transformation of the Commonwealth into a composite and multi-racial organisation certainly played a role in bringing about these changes but so too did Britain's turn to Europe. Throughout all the negotiations, the signals were unmistakable – if forced to choose between the Commonwealth and Europe, London would downgrade its ties with the Commonwealth rather than imperil those with Europe. Last but not least, while the monarchy remained as a symbolic link between Australia and Britain, other symbols of the erstwhile intimate Anglo-Australian connection disappeared. As noted in Chapter 9, between 1973 and 1975 the Whitlam government abolished British royal honours, replaced 'God Save the Queen' with a new national anthem and removed the 'British subject' imprint from Australian passports. While only symbolic, these changes emphasised the fact that Britain's importance in Australian political life as well as in its economic and strategic policy-making had declined significantly. The close ties of empire, which had bound Australia and Britain for several decades had become inconsequential.

This thesis therefore explains why Anglo-Australian relations underwent such radical change during the 1960s. It is important to emphasise that in no way did this thesis imply that relations between Australia and Britain had not experienced tough challenges before the 1960s. As discussed in the introduction, important disagreements were recorded between London and Canberra in the 1940s and 1950s, as a number of historians have pointed out. Divergences, however, were played down as both governments strove to maintain the close ties of empire for their own purposes. Yet, Britain's turn to Europe

posed a challenge of a different kind. Both the applications and the withdrawal from Malaysia and Singapore brought about an irreconcilable conflict of interest. The close relationship, which had existed until the beginning of the 1960s did not stand up to the strains imposed by Britain's reorientation towards Europe.

This thesis is an examination of the reaction of the Australian government to British policies. In particular, it explains how Australia perceived the challenges posed by the British reorientation, the manner of its response to them and the policies it implemented to reduce their impact. It is here that this thesis makes a contribution to the understanding of Anglo-Australian relations in the post-war period. The importance of this is two-fold. First, this study is the first comprehensive attempt to analyse the full import of Britain's turn to Europe on Anglo-Australian relations. Unlike previous studies, the scope of this thesis is not restricted to one particular aspect of, or crisis in, the Anglo-Australian relationship in the 1960s. On the contrary, it takes into account the political, strategic and economic consequences of Britain's European reorientation for the Australian government in its policy-making as it struggled to accept the inevitability of Britain's decision. It thus examines the consequences of Britain's three applications and the British withdrawal from east of Suez as a single whole, and weighs their incremental effect on the Anglo-Australian relationship. As mentioned above, the thesis contends that the relationship did not weaken as a consequence of one specific crisis. Rather, it declined rapidly as a result of the cumulative affect of the four perceived crises. The overall impact on the Australian mindset of vulnerability was complicated by the fact that Britain's actions not only occurred one after another – indeed overlapping in the case of Britain's 1967 application and the military withdrawal – but also took place within a relatively short period of time. Although the thesis agrees with Ward's contention that Australia's attachment to the idea of Britishness was profoundly shaken as a result of Britain's first application, it also argues that the crisis was

by no means 'the end of the affair.' In fact, it was the close succession of four crises and their cumulative impact that brought an era in Anglo-Australian relations to a close.

Second, this thesis integrates the politico-strategic and the politico-economic dimensions of Anglo-Australian relations. In general, Australian scholars have emphasised either the first or the second dimension. This preference for restricting the focus of academic analysis, however, has resulted in noticeably different explanations for the unravelling of Anglo-Australian ties. On the one hand, politico-strategic analyses have stressed the significance of strategic questions in shaping Australian post-war perceptions and policies towards Britain, and by extension, in weakening their bilateral relations. On the other hand, those scholars who have centred their attention on the politico-economic dimension, have accentuated the significance of economic and financial issues in undermining the relationship. In the light of these contrasting views, this thesis, by examining both dimensions, provides a more comprehensive explanation for the erosion of Anglo-Australian relations. In so doing, it demonstrated clearly that it was the interaction of both the politico-economic and politico-strategic implications for Australia of Britain's turn to Europe which caused the unravelling of the once intimate Anglo-Australian relationship.

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