



CERC WORKING PAPERS SERIES

No. 3 / 2003

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**Australia's Policy towards
Britain's Second Application to the
European Economic Community,
1966-67**

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ISSN 1447-0071

Published by the Contemporary Europe Research Centre in November 2003.

1. Introduction

In May 1967, four years after its ill-fated 1961-63 application to join the European Economic Community (EEC), Britain launched a new bid to join the Community.¹ This time, unlike in 1961-63 when negotiations between Britain and the Six² dragged on for eighteen months, the British application was a short-lived affair. British hopes to negotiate a swift entry into the EEC were in fact almost instantly shattered by the French decision in November 1967 to veto the British bid.

Apart from a few notable exceptions,³ the ephemeral nature of Britain's second application seems to have discouraged historians from paying due attention to an important phase in Britain's gradual reorientation towards Europe during the 1960s. This is especially true in Australia where the second application and the Australian response to it have been more or less treated as a non-event. While an adequate body of literature exists on Australia's policy towards Britain's first application,⁴ the Australian government's response to the 1967 bid has been completely ignored. This is surprising given the commonly accepted view that Britain's reorientation towards Europe represented a turning point in Anglo-Australian relations and that the British attempts to join the EEC in the 1960s were instrumental in weakening the close ties of empire which had existed between Britain and Australia until the late 1950s.

This paper, therefore, aims to redress this situation and to make a historical contribution to the understanding of Australia's policy towards Britain's second application. More specifically, the paper examines the problems and the challenges which confronted the Australian government in its response to Britain's renewed

efforts to seek EEC entry. In doing so, the paper relies heavily on recently released archival material in both Australia and Britain.

This paper argues that a number of factors influenced Australian policy. A constant factor throughout the 1966-67 period was the continuing French opposition to British entry which made the outcome of London's bid uncertain. Another factor was the Australian government's concern to avoid exposing itself to British pressure for trade compensation by doing anything that could be construed as an attempt to obstruct Britain's application. A third factor was the government's desire to prevent the Australian public gaining a true picture of the gloomy outlook for Australian farm exports to Britain, should the latter succeed in entering the EEC. Canberra was also concerned that the timing of the application coincided with the British attempts to disengage militarily from Southeast Asia, and that the British bid to join the EEC would further weaken Britain's resolve to remain in that area. Hence, Australian policymakers carefully avoided confrontation on the EEC question as they felt this could drive a wedge between Australia and Britain at a time when British goodwill was still needed. Furthermore, this paper contends that as Britain reoriented its policies towards Europe, it regarded Australia's concerns and interests as expendable.

2. Towards a new British application

The French veto of January 1963, which brought to a dramatic end Britain's first application to the EEC, threw the Macmillan government's policy on closer engagement with Europe into disarray and made Britain's entry impossible to attain in the short term. Confronting this harsh reality, the Conservative leader, Sir Alec Douglas-Home – who replaced Harold Macmillan at Downing Street

in October 1963 – ruled out closer co-operation with the Community for the foreseeable future. The question of EEC membership virtually disappeared from British politics. The Labour Party's victory in the October 1964 election did not prompt an immediate change of strategy in Britain's policy towards the Community. Labour had opposed entry while in opposition.⁵ Unsurprisingly, therefore, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson informed Australian Foreign Minister Paul Hasluck in November 1964 that his government 'did not see much prospect in the European Economic Community which had too many internal problems' and added that 'it was impossible for Britain to become committed to the agricultural policies of the Six'.⁶

Despite Wilson's claims, the Australian government maintained a watchful eye on Labour's European policy. Advice sent from Australian posts in Western Europe indicated that, while ruling out any move towards the EEC for the present, the Labour government might soon review its policy.⁷ In June 1965, Prime Minister Robert Menzies remarked privately that in the short term, the Common Market was 'a good subject to keep off since it [was] impossible to know in which direction the United Kingdom [would] have to move in due course'. In his view, Australia should refrain from 'taking positions' to avoid the risk of finding itself 'out on the limb'.⁸

Australian caution seemed justified as there were signs towards the end of 1965 that the Wilson government was slowly warming up to the idea of a renewed application to the EEC. On 6 December 1965 British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart told the Commons that Britain was ready to join the EEC provided that Britain's essential interests were safeguarded.⁹ In a speech in Bristol on 18 March 1966, Wilson made the same point by declaring

that 'given the right conditions it would be possible and right to join [the] EEC'.¹⁰

In Canberra, key government departments reacted in different ways to the Wilson government's apparent interest in closer ties with the EEC. The Department of External Affairs (DEA) strongly advocated the establishment of an interdepartmental committee with a view to reassessing Australia's negotiating position. As Alan Renouf, a First Assistant Secretary in the DEA, pointed out, 'events would move quite quickly once the British Government took the plunge'.¹¹ In his view, 'Australia might be placed in a position of some embarrassment if the Government had not determined well in advance what our attitude should be to the negotiations and their outcome'.¹² The majority of departments, however, viewed the prospect of a British application with less urgency. The attitude of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) was indicative. Despite recognising that the Common Market issue in Britain 'had become a more live one than it [had] been for some time', the DTI was in no hurry to discuss contingency planning as proposed by the DEA.¹³ The reasons for the DTI attitude will be outlined below; first it needs to be stressed that the DTI's views carried great weight in determining Australia's overall policy on the Common Market issue. Its minister, John McEwen, had always tended to regard the problem of British entry as falling into his exclusive sphere of competence. In this respect, Menzies had been the only personality in Cabinet capable of restraining him, as indeed he did in 1962 over Britain's previous negotiations with the EEC.¹⁴ But Menzies had retired in January 1966. Without him, the prime responsibility for Australia's policy on the EEC question rested with McEwen and his department. The new Prime Minister, Harold Holt, who was still establishing himself in office, had not acquired the authority in Cabinet that Menzies had had.¹⁵ On the EEC question, he let

McEwen take the lead. Significantly, it was a further year before any consideration was given to the formation of an interdepartmental committee as proposed by the DEA, with a preparatory meeting taking place in June 1967.¹⁶

The prevailing mood in Canberra contrasted to the growing concern felt by a number of Australian missions overseas. In London, High Commissioner Alexander Downer regarded the prospect of a British bid with great foreboding. In Brussels Ambassador Ralph Harry repeatedly complained to Canberra about the lack of guidance.¹⁷ He felt that Australian silence could be interpreted as indicating that no major Australian interest was at stake should Britain apply to join the EEC. Harry even sought permission to fly to London to confer with McEwen when the latter passed through the British capital in June 1966.¹⁸

The lack of guidance was partly due to the fact that in the first half of 1966 a British bid was still regarded in Canberra as being hypothetical. Cabinet discussed the issue briefly on 17 May and concluded that no diplomatic *démarche* was required at this stage. Cabinet felt that there was 'nothing said to date by the British Government' to which it could react.¹⁹ In finally sending some belated guidance to Harry in June, McEwen advised that 'ministers in Australia had deliberately decided not to attempt to reach an overall policy regarding British entry, but to take decisions as circumstances developed'. He also informed the ambassador that 'Australian representatives would have to live with not having a policy for the time being' and expressed concern over the strong statements against British entry made by Downer in London.²⁰

However, the uncertain nature of British policy towards the EEC was not the only reason for Canberra's muted attitude. There

was an ulterior motive based on the belief that 'since the question of British entry and trade might be mixed up with defence and other considerations, it was terribly important that Australian representatives should not make statements predicting Australian future policy'. As McEwen explained,

the attitude of the Australian Government in the event of a British application for entry or opening of negotiations could be very different from the attitude adopted in 1962/63. There [is] not merely a possibility that Australia might go 'soft' but that Australia might be prepared to give Britain some trade benefits even if these were not required. Because of the desirability of ensuring a continued British presence east of Suez, it might be necessary to help meet the cost of British defence policy.²¹

Throughout 1965 Britain had shown a growing reluctance to continue to play a military role east of Suez and, more specifically, in Southeast Asia where Australia's main strategic interests lay.²² The prospect of a British military disengagement deeply worried the Holt government. Canberra feared that a British withdrawal would undermine Australia's forward defence strategy, leave a political and military vacuum in a highly volatile region, and weaken the American determination to retain a military capability in Southeast Asia.²³

The depth of the Holt government's concern over the uncertainty surrounding Britain's military presence in Southeast Asia was apparent when Holt met Wilson in London in July 1966. Discussions between the two leaders centred on British plans to reduce British military forces east of Suez, and only cursory attention was given to the Common Market issue. Holt raised the matter briefly on 11 July, asking Wilson his views 'on the prospects and the timing of Britain's entry into the EEC'.²⁴ In reply, Wilson said that Britain would go in – and indeed was 'keen to go in' – if it

could do so on the right terms.²⁵ However, as if to qualify what he had said, Wilson immediately drew Holt's attention to the difficulties facing a British application.²⁶ Given the still tentative nature of Britain's moves towards the EEC, Wilson clearly did not want to alarm his Australian visitor unduly. In this task he was aided by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, George Thomson, who had been given special responsibility for European affairs in the new Labour administration. Thomson reassured Holt that 'British entry was still a long way ahead' and emphasised the importance of the French attitude in any eventual British step towards EEC membership.²⁷ The French, however, were hardly forthcoming.²⁸

Despite continuing uncertainty about French intentions, during the summer of 1966 London began to sound out the EEC countries about the prospects for a British entry.²⁹ 'There was a general feeling among the [British] Ministers that Britain could not drift any longer on this subject. The Ministers thought that if nothing is done now the domestic arrangements within the Six would be hardening and the problem of entry would become more difficult'.³⁰ Of particular concern to the British was the completion of the Community's farm regime scheduled for 1969. Furthermore, the sterling crisis of July 1966 may also have been instrumental in persuading Wilson to seize the initiative on Europe. The Common Market option appeared a good opportunity for Wilson to revive his government's dwindling fortunes after the July financial crisis.³¹ In August Wilson reshuffled his Cabinet and moved the Europeanist George Brown from the Department of Economic Affairs to the Foreign Office. As Wilson himself recalls in his memoirs, 'we seemed to be drawing nearer to the point where we would have to take a decision about Europe, and George Brown seemed to me the appropriate leader for the task which might lie ahead'.³²

Although his Cabinet was divided between those favouring and those opposing entry,³³ Wilson was clearly gearing up to a decision on Britain's future relationship with the Community.³⁴ By October, a number of studies on the EEC had been carried out in Whitehall, and Wilson felt that it was the time for a Cabinet debate and a decision.³⁵ He convened a full-day Cabinet meeting at Chequers on 22 October to allow for a thorough discussion as to whether he and Foreign Secretary Brown should undertake a tour of the EEC capitals. Its aim would be to conduct a series of high-level visits to enable the British government 'to ascertain with the necessary authority and precision, what kind of terms [Britain] might hope to get in a negotiation for membership'.³⁶ In the end, the Chequers meeting did not reach a decision. However, on 9 November, the Cabinet gave the 'green light' to the tour of the EEC capitals.³⁷ On 10 November, Wilson informed the Commons that his government was approaching discussions with the Six with the clear determination to enter the EEC.³⁸

In Australia the government's reaction was muted. Australian posts in Western Europe, however, monitored Wilson's moves closely. On 28 November the Senior Trade Officer in London reported that 'a continuing acceleration to the momentum of Britain's tentative moves towards a renewal of [its] application to join the E.E.C. has been imparted over the last month'. He pointed out that 'most top civil servants are now urging entry, as they cannot see any other viable position for Britain at the end of the century ... There is open support from a large majority in the Commons'. He therefore advised the DEA that 'time is growing short for a credible British attempt, as the Community will crystallise [sic] most of its arrangements in the next year or two. Opinion throughout the country appears to be moving in favour of British membership'.³⁹

Once he gained Cabinet approval, Wilson moved swiftly. A timetable for the tour of the EEC capitals was soon devised, and it was agreed that consultations with Commonwealth governments should take place after the tour and before the announcement of any decision to proceed with negotiations. The British government decided to leave itself with as much room for manoeuvre as possible in these consultations. A Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was to be avoided and, for the present, Commonwealth governments would be kept informed and given a short account of each visit. As far as Australia was concerned, a planned visit of the Commonwealth Secretary to the Far East was an excellent opportunity to discuss the EEC issue 'informally' and 'in a preliminary way'.⁴⁰

On the eve of Wilson and Brown's visit to Rome, the Commonwealth Office (CO) instructed the British High Commissions to remind Commonwealth governments that Britain would 'have fully in mind' the interests of Commonwealth countries.⁴¹ Was the Holt government reassured by this British declaration of intent? Hardly. During 1966 Australian officials had remarked on more than one occasion that the implications of British membership for Australia did not loom large in British thinking.⁴² At the end of December, Tom Critchley, the Australian External Affairs Representative in London, warned the DEA that 'the British Government [was] committed to entering the EEC if at all possible and that it ha[d] made up its mind to try every possible approach'. According to Critchley, 'Commonwealth interests and more specifically Australian interests [were] therefore unlikely to be allowed to stand in the way of British entry. Australia [could] expect sympathetic consideration but no more'.⁴³

3. Australian defence concerns over British moves towards Europe

Although the loss of Australia's trade preferences in the British market which British entry would entail was a concern,⁴⁴ there were other important – and certainly more pressing – political and strategic considerations that worried the Australian government with regard to a renewed British attempt to join the EEC. As Critchley noted in the same December despatch,

Britain's entry into the EEC [could] ... be expected to reinforce current pressures for Britain to abandon its defence role east of Suez. This could be expected to follow from the growing British sentiment for Europe, from European pressures and by no means least the short-term balance of payments problems that entry into Europe [would] involve.⁴⁵

Critchley's words accurately summed up the growing sense of unease prevailing in Australian official circles with regard to the strategic implications of what became known as Wilson's 'approach to Europe'. The serious sterling crisis of July 1966, and the conclusion of the Indonesian-Malaysian *Konfrontasi* in August 1966, had raised additional doubts in Australia about the strength of Wilson's resolve to maintain a British military presence in Southeast Asia. From an Australian viewpoint, Wilson's approach to Europe was clearly a disturbing and potentially damaging complication. As early as 1961 the DEA had advised the Menzies Cabinet that Britain's entry into the EEC 'would be likely to accelerate the shedding of United Kingdom commitments east of Suez'.⁴⁶ In the five years since, Canberra had remained concerned that British entry might result in 'a diminution in British concern and interest in maintaining an effective political and strategic role east of Suez where [Australia's] main concern [lay]'.⁴⁷ Thus, the crucial problem now, in late 1966, was that Wilson's approach to Europe would spell

the end for Britain's already wavering resolve to remain in the Southeast Asian region. Unlike in 1961, when the prospects of a British departure still appeared relatively remote, the danger of a withdrawal at this time appeared very real.⁴⁸

From the British records it is not possible to establish a clear correlation between Wilson's approach to Europe and his east of Suez policy. The documents pertaining to the 1967 decision to withdraw from east of Suez make virtually no reference to the Common Market issue. Yet, connections, if not a correlation, did exist between the two issues. In early May 1967, following the decision both to join the EEC and to withdraw from east of Suez, Chancellor of the Exchequer Callaghan reminded Downer that the British

must cut their coat according to their cloth. The price of entry to the E.E.C. for the first few years would be great. It could amount to as much as pounds 300 million or even pounds 400 million. Obviously the advantages lay in the long term; there is none in the short term. So the initial period would be difficult and costly. This meant ... that [the British] must prune severely the defence bill. It was just impossible for Britain to remain in Malaysia [and Singapore].⁴⁹

A few days later, British Defence Secretary Denis Healey told his American counterpart Robert McNamara that 'the decision [to withdraw] was being made partly for budgetary reasons, but he [Healey] also acknowledged that it was related to the British desire for association with Europe'. Healey also 'indicated that, in the British view, it would be psychologically incompatible with their proposed role in Europe for them to maintain commitments on the mainland of Asia'.⁵⁰ Australian concerns were not misplaced.

4. Visits to the EEC and Australian policy towards British entry in the spring of 1967

In January 1967 Wilson and Brown began their tour of the EEC capitals. In the opening meeting with the Italian government on 16 January, Wilson told the Italians that 'we have come to the discussions with the clear intention of entering into the Community: and we have decided to go right to the very end'.⁵¹ Wilson emphasised that Britain 'had embarked on a great effort and would not like to see the great issues bogged down in discussions of questions such as kangaroo meat'.⁵² 'Kangaroo meat' has become a byword for Australia's stubborn defence of its own interests during the 1961-63 negotiations. Brown told the Italians that 'in relation to the Commonwealth trade it was well known that there were problems affecting Australia and Canada, but the really difficult case was that of New Zealand'. Brown therefore stressed the need for special arrangements for New Zealand as opposed to transitional arrangements for other Commonwealth countries. In the following weeks, Wilson and Brown presented the same arguments during their visits to the remaining capitals of the EEC.⁵³

These British tactics did not escape the Australians' notice. In cabling Canberra in early February 1967, Harry was emphatic that 'this desire to avoid involved discussions seems to amount to almost an obsession with Wilson and would not dispose him to fight for points of interest only to Australia'.⁵⁴ For its part, the External Affairs office in London reported that 'if Britain sees an opportunity for a successful application ... she may be expected to seize it quickly, with a minimum of discussion on broad principles only, and with little disposition to engage in protracted negotiations on matters of detail which might be of primary interest to Australia'.⁵⁵ Advice tendered by other Australian missions in Western Europe followed similar lines.⁵⁶ Yet, not all the news coming from Europe was discouraging. In particular, the Australians could take some comfort from the fact that the French attitude towards Britain

remained extremely unhelpful, if not overtly negative. Despatches from the Australian Embassy in Paris were pessimistic about the British chances of overcoming French hostility. As Ambassador Ronald Walker noted in February 1967, 'the strong impression here is that [the French] are opposed to [British entry]'.⁵⁷

In Canberra, the Holt government recognised the difficulties that Britain was encountering over its European bid. It doubted that, even if it decided to apply, Britain would be able to join in the light of the persistent French hostility. The overall government view, therefore, was that the best course of action was to 'wait and see'. As Bunting noted in February 1967, 'there is not a great deal of anxiety here over Britain's prospects though we are keeping a close watch on developments'.⁵⁸ Yet not all Australian officials were in agreement with the government's 'wait and see' policy, particularly those away from Canberra. In mid-February Harry sent a despatch to the DEA, once again complaining about a lack of guidance. According to him, the government's 'public attitude towards the "Wilson Round" has not indicated much Australian interest'. In his view, guidance 'would seem desirable, if we wish to make any attempt to influence the outcome', and to dispel the impression that Australian trade was now so diversified that 'Australian exports to Great Britain would not constitute a major problem in any negotiations'. Harry warned the DEA that '[Australia's] silence could in certain circumstances be construed as an act of policy'.⁵⁹

Harry's despatch was not particularly well received in Canberra. Campbell, Assistant Secretary (DTI), remarked rather harshly that 'until told otherwise [Harry] should stick to the guidance notes' he had already been given.⁶⁰ On 29 March, the DEA belatedly sent guidance. In noting that the "'Wilson round" ha[d] aroused great public interest in Britain and the Six', the DEA

conceded that 'it [was] not unnatural to feel that Australia should adopt a comparably outspoken attitude'. Yet, it hastened to point out that 'doing so would be profitable only if it were consistent with the tactical requirements of policies adopted by the Australian Government'. External Affairs stressed that

departments do not ... consider the UK-EEC position in isolation. It is necessary to strike a delicate balance between Government policy in this field, in the Kennedy Round, in other international fields and in relation to the totality of Australian trade, economic and political aims and objectives.⁶¹

External Affairs, therefore, urged Australian posts in Europe to keep strictly to the government's basic line on the question of British entry and summarised Australia's position in three main points: first, 'the decision to enter the EEC [was] one for Britain alone to take'; second, 'the adoption by Britain of the Common External Tariff [CET] and the CAP [Common Agricultural Policy] as [had] evolved so far, could cause serious damage to Australian industries'; and third, 'if Britain decided to negotiate [it was hoped] she [would] press for terms and conditions to protect vital Australian trade interests'.⁶²

Harry had been forewarned of the kind of response he could expect from Canberra. In a message dated 23 March, Keith Shann, First Assistant Secretary (DEA), advised him that 'Trade and Treasury, at present, seem[ed] inclined to a policy of "layin' low and sayin' nuffin" [sic] or at least as little as possible'. Shann pointed out that 'one of the Government's major concerns is not to be laid open to moral pressure from Britain for some forms of compensation e.g. in the trade field in the event of a second failure to vault the ramparts, should anything we do have presented a major stumbling block in the way'.⁶³ There were, of course, other reasons for 'lying low and saying nothing'. Until 'essential

Commonwealth interests' were spelled out and as long as the British prospects for entry remained uncertain, there was no need for Australia to voice disapproval. Furthermore, with the Kennedy Round of GATT negotiations reaching the final stage in the spring of 1967, the Holt government was keen to negotiate the best possible outcome for Australian export markets, and British co-operation was thought to be important in achieving this aim. The Australian view was that a good deal on a number of farm commodities would soften the impact of British entry. Thus, the Kennedy Round was seen in Canberra as a useful, albeit partial, remedy for the likely loss of British markets.⁶⁴ Finally but not less importantly, the question of a possible British withdrawal from east of Suez with its strategic implications for Australia, as discussed above, was a major concern and yet another reason for not disturbing Anglo-Australian relations unduly.

5. From the European tour to the launch of a new bid

Despite the mixed outcome of his European tour and existing divisions within the Cabinet, Wilson pressed ahead and mounted a new bid for membership.⁶⁵ With the exception of Rome, The Hague, Brussels and Luxembourg, Wilson and Brown's visits had not been as positive as Britain had wished. In Paris, de Gaulle reminded the British that 'the participation of Britain in the Community presented great problems, given the differences of its economic interests, its monetary arrangements, its contacts with the outside world'.⁶⁶ Yet, Wilson seemed to believe that a 'rebuff would be very difficult' for the French.⁶⁷ In Bonn, consultations with the Kiesinger government were also disappointing. The German Chancellor not only warned the British of the strong French resistance to British entry, but he also signalled his country's unwillingness to 'get deeply involved in controversial matters' with the French.⁶⁸

The Cabinet was itself still seriously divided on the approach to Europe, as was the Labour Party.⁶⁹ In this context, it is noteworthy that within the Cabinet, three ministers encouraged Australia to come out in the open and to take a vocal stance against Wilson's approach to Europe. In mid-February, the Minister of Agriculture, Fred Peart, asked A.P. Fleming, the Australian Special Commercial Adviser in London, why Australia was 'so quiet about the possibility of the United Kingdom entering the Common Market'. A few days later, Peart told another Australian representative that 'it [was] time that you (meaning Australia) took action'.⁷⁰ In late April 1967, following his talks with Peart, Herbert Bowden (Commonwealth Office) and Douglas Jay (Board of Trade), McEwen reported to Holt that the British ministers put the view to him quite strongly that Australia should publicly denounce the negative effects of British entry on both Australian and British interests. According to McEwen, 'they deplored that without this it would be accepted that for Australia [Britain's] possible entry posed no problems'. Clearly, as McEwen remarked, some British ministers 'were looking for ammunition' to sway a divided Cabinet against a new application to the EEC.⁷¹ Australia, however, was not prepared to provide it.

Between mid-March and 2 May 1967, when the formal decision to apply to the EEC was finally taken, the British Cabinet convened several times to examine the 'approach to Europe'.⁷² Step by step, Wilson adroitly managed to steer his ministers in the direction he favoured. Those who opposed a British application comforted themselves with the thought that de Gaulle would veto it yet again. On 2 May Wilson announced in the Commons that Britain would again bid for membership under article 237 of the Treaty of Rome. In relation to the Commonwealth question, Wilson told the House that 'there are also highly important Commonwealth interests ... for which it is our duty to seek safeguards in the negotiations.

These include, in particular, the special problems of New Zealand and of Commonwealth sugar producing countries'.⁷³ On 10 May, the House of Commons gave its blessing to the new bid. On 11 May, the application was deposited in Brussels. Britain was again knocking at the door of the Six.

5.1 Australian and Commonwealth concerns in the lead-up to the British decision to apply

How was the British government planning to safeguard what Wilson called 'highly important Commonwealth interests'? As far as Australia was concerned, the British Cabinet discussions which took place in the days immediately preceding the decision to apply gave a clear indication of British thinking. For Australia, they were far from reassuring. On 27 April, the Cabinet considered two memoranda by Commonwealth Secretary Bowden; one on the value of the Commonwealth,⁷⁴ the other on Commonwealth interests in Britain's negotiations for entry.⁷⁵ In presenting the first memorandum, Bowden emphasised that 'there had been major changes in recent years, and we should make it clear that we were not prepared to sustain the Commonwealth whatever the cost to us might be'.⁷⁶ In the second memorandum, he explained that Australia was likely to ask Britain to secure permanent arrangements, 'except to the extent that prices and access to the enlarged Community for cereals, meat, dairy produce and sugar are assured by international commodity agreements'.⁷⁷ He told the Cabinet, however, that 'it would not, in practice, be possible to obtain all [Commonwealth] desiderata'.⁷⁸ The memorandum stated that, as regards the Australians, 'we should probably be unable to secure any permanent derogations for them and the outcome would probably be transitional periods for the gradual application of the levy and/or the common external tariff, with perhaps some reduced

duty quota on a few industrial raw materials'.⁷⁹ Although Bowden reminded his colleagues of the 'importance of sustaining as far as possible the interests of Australia', in the ensuing discussion he observed that

in considering the interests of Australia and Canada, it was pertinent to bear in mind that not only had they a higher level of income per head than the United Kingdom, or any member of the EEC, but also that in recent years they had been guided solely by their own interests in reducing or eliminating preferences which they accorded [Britain], in pursuing a policy of rapid industrialisation and, e.g., in buying foreign aircraft when we might reasonably have looked to them to pay more regard to United Kingdom interests.⁸⁰

Australia, therefore, unlike New Zealand, was not to be considered a special case. Australia was not only less dependent on trade with Britain than New Zealand, but it was experiencing an extended period of sustained economic expansion and was gradually beginning to enjoy the benefits of a surging global demand for minerals.⁸¹ Furthermore, Australia was increasingly diversifying its pattern of trade from Europe towards the Asia-Pacific region (see Figures 1 and 2). Given these circumstances, Australian concerns over British membership of the EEC were not likely to find much sympathy in Whitehall. From London's perspective, the Australian case, while deserving attention, was probably not worth too much concern. However, the question arose of how to inform the Australians or how to prevent them – if they felt sufficiently indignant at perceived British abandonment – from causing domestic political problems by appealing to those sections of the British public that were still sympathetic to the Commonwealth, to lobby for the protection of Australian interests.

6. Australian policy in the lead-up to the British decision to apply for membership

During the northern spring of 1967 British concerns about a possible Australian backlash over the new bid remained unrealised. In Canberra, reports that the British Cabinet was about to make a decision on the EEC application were overshadowed by the sudden announcement in late April 1967 of the British intention to withdraw completely from Malaysia and Singapore by the mid-1970s. The British decision was distressing news for the Holt government. In response, Canberra launched an intense diplomatic campaign to persuade the British not to take such a drastic course of action. Against this backdrop, the lead-up to the British Cabinet's decision to seek EEC membership was anti-climactic. On 24 April, the British High Commissioner informed Holt that his government was close to a decision on the EEC issue. He conveyed his government's intention 'to take fully into account any general consideration which ... [the Australian and other Commonwealth] Governments wish to put forward at this stage on the hypothesis that the British Government are considering applying to enter the Community'.⁸²

Figure 1. Australia's trade reorientation from Western Europe to the Asia-Pacific: Australian imports

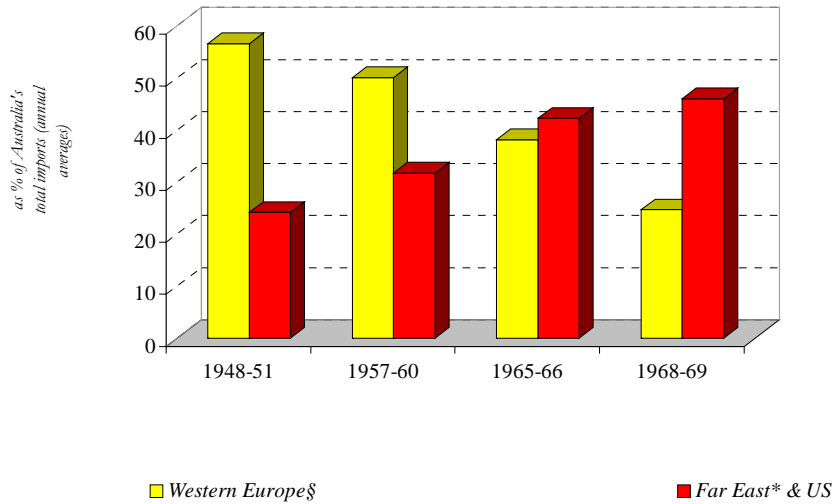
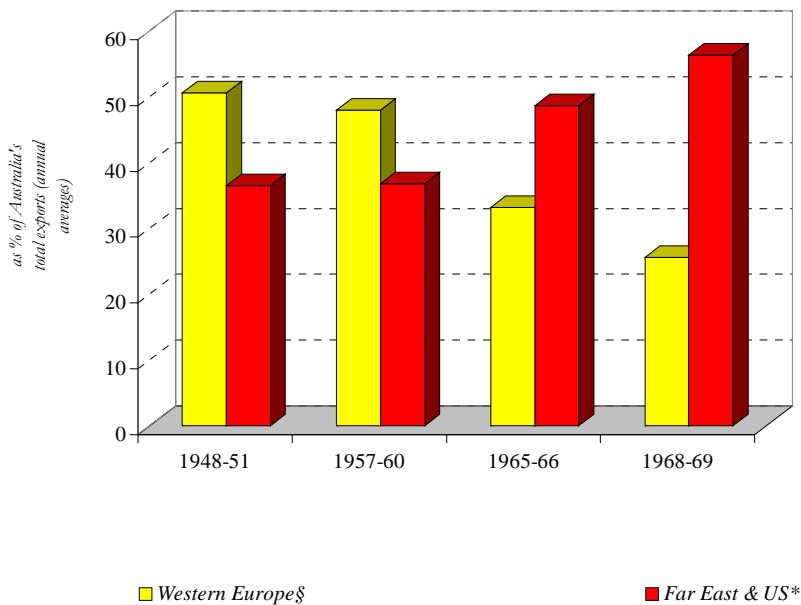


Figure 2. Australia's trade reorientation from Western Europe to the Asia-Pacific: Australian exports



§ Britain, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, West Germany
 * Brunei, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Laos, Macao, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam

Source: Dyster and Meredith, *Australia in the International Economy*, p. 249.

The Australian response was non-committal. 'The question is', as Peter Lawler, Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department (PMD), put it, 'whether [Australian pressure] may aggravate British sensitivities which may already have developed over our reactions on the issue of British policy in Asia'. In Lawler's view, Australia 'need[ed] to guard against aggravating British sensitivities in a way which could be generally counter-productive for our dealings with them particularly on the fundamental defence issue'.⁸³ Holt agreed with this assessment. He made it clear that any Australian reply should take into account the question of British forces in Southeast Asia. Holt believed that Australia was already pressing Britain strongly on the east of Suez question and 'we might not be able to press on EEC at the same time'.⁸⁴ In this he was supported by the Treasurer, William McMahon, who thought it 'unwise for Australia to open up a "second front"'.⁸⁵ Thus, in seeking advice from McEwen on the draft of a possible reply, Holt suggested that Australia 'should not at this stage make any general comment on the policy issues but simply say that the extent to which Australian interests would be affected by British entry into the Community depends upon safeguards [the British] could provide to cover our interests'.⁸⁶

McEwen concurred. In the reply to the British which was for the most part drafted by McEwen himself, Holt simply pointed out that 'in general Australia's problems are much the same as in 1962. While there has been some diversification of [Australia's] trade, no substantial new markets have been found for the sensitive items in our commodity exports. In fact in absolute terms Australia has more at risk now than 1962 and this is growing'. He reiterated the importance of commodity agreements as a means of overcoming some of the problems of British entry and urged the British to take a positive attitude on commodity agreements within the Kennedy

Round. Holt also drew attention to the possible implications of entry for sterling and for future capital inflow from Britain. He observed that Australia had always adopted a responsible attitude with regard to sterling holdings and had consistently stood by Britain in times of adversity. He concluded: 'We trust you will keep these considerations in mind'.⁸⁷ Whether the British would do so was of course a matter for the UK-EEC negotiations to reveal. The Australian government, however, was under no illusions. As the Secretary of the DTI, Alan Westerman, explained to Harry, 'there was no point in Australia putting in a lot of work to devise safeguard arrangements unless we knew that the British would seriously attempt to negotiate them ... but we should be under no illusion that the British would do anything effective'.⁸⁸

7. The first round of Anglo-Australian consultations, June 1967

'Taking Britain into Europe [was] not all plain sailing', however, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* euphemistically put it in early May.⁸⁹ Uncertainty about Britain's prospects of gaining entry to the EEC remained strong, even within Whitehall. Saville Garner, Permanent Under-Secretary of State (CO), told Downer that, 'no-one, and I mean no-one, in the British Government machine knows what will be the result of the application and conjecture ranges from black pessimism to the rosier optimism, but there can be no certainty'.⁹⁰ As ever, the French position remained crucial. From Paris, Ambassador Walker informed Canberra that '[the] French attitude remains opposed to British entry and in their effort to draw negotiations out they will raise precisely those questions about British entry which the Five and European opinion within France could not challenge as unreasonable'.⁹¹

Developments in Europe proved Walker's assessment accurate. At a press conference on 16 May, de Gaulle questioned whether Britain was really ready to join.⁹² While not exercising a formal veto, de Gaulle intended to dampen Wilson's hopes of joining the EEC soon. For his part, Wilson could not afford to back down after having staked his personal credibility, and that of his government, on the new bid. On 17 May, he told de Gaulle that Britain would not take the General's negative remarks as a final answer.⁹³ He instructed government departments to carry on with plans for negotiations. As Arthur Snelling, Deputy Under-Secretary of State (CO), put it,

the message from the summit to senior officials in all departments in Whitehall was to ignore [the] [G]eneral's pronouncements and to press on vigorously with preparations for early negotiations with the Six. This message ... continued to reverberate throughout the corridors of power in loud, clear tones, and heaven help those who choose to take it lightly.⁹⁴

De Gaulle, however, remained unmoved. On 29 May, he told the EEC Council of Ministers in Rome that the Six had to have 'profound and prolonged discussions' among themselves on the overall issue of enlarging the Community, before they examined the merits of the British application.⁹⁵ It was evident that the General was not eager to see Britain join the Community.

Despite these early difficulties, the British remained determined 'to clear away in the near future bilateral negotiations with [Commonwealth governments] on safeguarding their interests', so that they would 'be in a position to announce to the Six their readiness to enter into negotiations'.⁹⁶ Whitehall was under strong pressure to dispose of the Commonwealth problem as expeditiously as possible.⁹⁷ To this end, consultations with Australia, which had

been requested by the British to discuss 'essential Australian interests', were scheduled for early June.⁹⁸ The talks were expected to be preliminary and entirely non-committal.⁹⁹ Yet, the British approached them with a degree of anxiety. They were concerned that 'Australia may cut up very rough when [it] hears that we take the view that it will be impossible for us to secure for her any special arrangements extending beyond the transitional period for our entry into EEC'.¹⁰⁰ It was felt that the Australians could 'make a big row', and if that was the case, they could 'get widespread support in the British press and Parliament ... on the ground that [the British government was] letting down [its] truest friends'.¹⁰¹

In the event, when Australian and British officials met in London between 6-8 June, British concerns proved unfounded.¹⁰² Despite being told that Britain would probably be unable to negotiate more than transitional arrangements for Australia,¹⁰³ the Australian team raised no objections and maintained a low-key approach. It made it clear that it 'had no brief to discuss "essentiality" of items'. It confined itself to 'describing facts on commodities', and 'assessing loss in [Australia's] trade if there were no safeguards'.¹⁰⁴ Australian officials were of course following a strict brief. Canberra had advised them 'to confine this round to getting the facts across and not be led into any suggestions about safeguards or selection of some commodities as being more or less essential than others'. The team had also been warned that the British would 'no doubt seek to play it in a manner which continually [put] pressure on us'.¹⁰⁵

The British, however, were irritated, finding the discussions with the Australian officials 'difficult' and 'unproductive'.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the British had hopes that the Australians would not only refrain from creating undue problems, but would also be more amenable

than they actually were. They wanted the Australians to indicate what interests were regarded as essential, as even 'New Zealand was limiting her request for special arrangements to three commodities (butter, cheese and lamb)'.¹⁰⁷ But the Australians 'could not agree to follow suit'.¹⁰⁸ The British team ended the three days of talks by making a unilateral distinction between those commodities which they regarded as being not 'seriously at risk' (meats, cheese, apple and pears, wines, eggs, honey, lead and zinc, and cereals with the exception of wheat) and those likely to be significantly affected by British entry (butter, wheat, canned and dried fruit, manufactured goods).¹⁰⁹ In relation to sugar, Australian and British officials agreed that this item should be discussed at a conference of sugar-producing countries to be held in London in late June.¹¹⁰ While seeking to categorise Australian commodities, the British team was careful, at this stage, to avoid drawing too firm a distinction between 'essential' and 'inessential' interests.¹¹¹ The British were wary of making commitments or 'agreeing with [the Australians] the opening position to be adopted with the Six'.¹¹² Godfrey Shannon, Assistant Under-Secretary (CO), noted in mid-May that

in 1961-63 the British government [was] handicapped by having to negotiate on two fronts, that is, with the Commonwealth as well as the EEC. [The British government] ought to try to avoid getting into the same position again ... [T]he consultations with the Commonwealth should be conducted on the basis of asking them what they want to tell us, but making no commitments to them about what we shall do about their representations, and keeping our hands free to decide what we say to the Six and at what stage of our negotiations. We should, moreover, not disclose to the Commonwealth in advance what our negotiating position is to be.¹¹³

7.1 The Holt visit to London, June 1967

The Australian refusal to distinguish between essential and inessential Australian interests was continued by Holt in his talks with Wilson in mid-June. Holt had flown to London primarily to discuss the important developments in Britain's east of Suez policy. On the Common Market issue the Australian leader confined himself to clarifying briefly the Australian approach to the British application.¹¹⁴ He told Wilson that 'his main purpose would be to explain and put in its political context the reason why Australia could not at this stage at least identify "essential trade interests" that she would wish to see protected as opposed to the lesser or inessential interests'.¹¹⁵ As he pointed out, 'he could not go home and suggest that any particular industry was regarded as expendable'.¹¹⁶

Holt's tactics, dilatory as they might have appeared to the British, were motivated by domestic concerns, as set out in a cable that McEwen had sent to Holt on the eve of the latter's arrival in London. As noted earlier, Holt had let McEwen take the lead on the Common Market issue, and in the absence of any substantive discussion in Cabinet on the matter, Australian tactics were principally determined by the Trade Minister and his department.¹¹⁷ In the cable, McEwen argued that it would not be possible for the British to achieve entry under conditions which would avoid damage to Australia. Therefore, 'because of the British determination to enter Europe ... we must recognize that there is very little scope for us ... to influence the terms upon which Britain might enter the E.E.C.'. The course of action envisaged by McEwen was 'to adopt a posture which is determined primarily by domestic political and economic considerations and which will give us the best presentational position with the Australian public and with the industries concerned, if and when market damage occurs'.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, McEwen recommended:

We must continue to maintain that all our trade interests are important and that we welcome Britain's undertaking to safeguard them ... We should, I think, recognize that at some later stage there may be a 'crunch' which will force us to engage in a salvage operation ... Decisions of this kind would involve jettisoning some industries to attempt to preserve the interests of others. You will be aware of the domestic political and economic implications of such a course. It, therefore, seems important to me that we should defer taking decisions of this kind as long as possible ... For these reasons I believe we should not be shifted from our present line.¹¹⁹

8. Australian interests in the UK-EEC negotiations

Meanwhile, in Britain, the Ministerial Committee on the Approach to Europe met in June 1967 to discuss the length of the transitional periods which Britain would seek in negotiations with the Six.¹²⁰ Whitehall departments had already given preliminary consideration to the terms of entry. While the FO preferred a five year transitional period for all purposes, other departments such as the CO favoured different periods for different purposes, with agricultural products being generally accorded a seven year transitional period.¹²¹ In spite of the Committee's failure to make a final decision in June,¹²² it was evident that the Wilson government was determined to keep British requests on Commonwealth safeguards to a bare minimum. This seemed an inescapable course of action in view of continuing French hostility.

While the British were attempting to work out their opening negotiating position, the Australian government machinery had not remained idle. Canberra had been forced into action. The DTI had begun somewhat belatedly to produce a series of briefs and position papers to assess the economic effects of British entry on Australia's trade. The DTI approach was predictable: despite the diversification

of Australia's trade away from Britain, it held the view that British entry would be detrimental to Australian interests and regarded the ultimate loss of preference as 'a matter of considerable concern to Australia'.¹²³ The DTI stressed that Britain was still Australia's biggest export market both in value and volume terms (see Table 1). According to the department, although exports to Britain had declined as a percentage of Australia's total exports, the country's dependence on the British market had actually increased in the case of some key commodities. Exports of beef, butter, fresh and canned fruit, and sugar had risen by volume between 1959/62 and 1962/65. On this point, the argument of the DTI was incorrect, as the share taken by the UK had in fact decreased (see Table 2). As if trying to drive home a point at any cost, Trade insisted that alternative markets were difficult to find and that there were 'whole communities and industries in Australia which [were] geared to the British market'.¹²⁴

This of course was true. However, the problem with the DTI line was that it over- emphasised the potential damage which British entry would inflict on Australia. As L.D. Thomson, Assistant Secretary (DEA) observed, the DTI (as well as Treasury) were too 'preoccupied with the injuries [Australia could] suffer'.¹²⁵ In this context, it is noteworthy that, in January 1966, Ken Campbell, the EEC policy desk officer in the DTI, conceded privately that 'British entry into the Common Market would not seriously affect Australian trading interests as before ... The situation was not the same as 1963'.¹²⁶ Nonetheless, British entry would force painful readjustments on certain sectors of the economy. The farm sector would suffer the most (see Table 3), as Britain would have to accept the EEC's CET and CAP. Yet, trade diversification and the incipient mineral boom would help soften the blow of entry overall.

Notwithstanding these facts, the DTI took the line that little had changed since the first application in 1961.

Table 1. Australian overseas trade: Britain's main export markets, 1959-66

	1959-60		1965-66	
	<i>A\$ (million)</i>	<i>% of total exports</i>	<i>A\$ (million)</i>	<i>% of total exports</i>
NZ	109	5.8	171	6.3
Japan	269	14.3	470	17.3
EEC	351	18.7	417	15.3
UK	495	26.5	473	17.4
USA	152	8.1	338	12.4

Source: NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Australian Overseas Trade (undated).

Table 2. Australia's reliance on British market (some key commodities): a comparison between 1959-62 and 1962-65

	<i>Change in average volume</i>	<i>Change in share taken by the UK of total Australian exports (on single commodity basis)</i>
Beef and Veal	+ 8.9%	30 to 20%
Butter	+ 20.9%	84%
Apple and Pears	+ 4.3%	63 to 54%
Canned fruit	+ 20.1%	95 to 87%
Sugar	+ 20%	45 to 36%

Source: NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, British entry into EEC: Conspectus of Australian Position – 1966 compared with 1961.

Apart from the traditional commodities, British entry had raised a further concern for Australia: sterling. During Wilson's visit to Paris in January 1967, de Gaulle had emphasised the sterling problem. He was concerned that Britain's recurrent balance of payment was a reserve currency. De Gaulle feared that, under the provisions of the Treaty of Rome, Britain would seek assistance from the EEC if difficulties arose from the role of sterling as a reserve currency. He did not intend to bail sterling out. In the

course of 1967, the French would repeatedly refer to the sterling issue as a stumbling block on Britain's road to entry.

Table 3. Exports of Australian agricultural produce to Britain, 1965-66

	<i>Total export</i>	<i>Exports to the UK</i>	<i>% UK of total exports</i>
All items	£1090m	£190m	17.4
Mutton and lamb	£18.2m	£2m	11
Butter	£20m	£15.5m	77.4
Cheese	£5.4m	£1.6m	29.6
Wheat	£105.5m	£13m	12.3
Apples	£10.3m	£5.1m	49.5
Pears	£3m	£1.3m	43.3
Tinned fruit	£15.2m	£9.9m	65
Sultanas and raisins	£8.5m	£3.7m	43.5
Currants	£0.8m	£0.2m	25
Barley	£4.6m	£0.7m	46.5
Sugar	£37.6m	£17.5m	46.5
Beef and Veal	£78.2m	£21.8m	27.8

Source: PRO, FCO 20/49, Eur(S) (67)2, Draft brief for talks between the Prime Minister and Mr. Holt, the Prime Minister of Australia: Note by the Secretaries, 7.6.1967.

The sterling problem could not leave the Australian government indifferent. Despite a growing diversification towards the US dollar, Australian reserves held in sterling still accounted for approximately 70 per cent of the total in 1966 (see Table 4). Canberra recognised that British entry would have no automatic implications for Australian sterling balances and it acknowledged that it was impossible to predict the likely financial effects of British entry on Australia. Yet, there was concern about five possible outcomes. First, Australia feared that it would not only lose its preferential treatment but could be discriminated against as Britain progressively abolished restrictions on capital movements with the EEC. In 1965-66, the capital inflow from Britain amounted to A\$250 million.¹²⁷ Second, as a member of the sterling area, Australia continued to enjoy some preference in the London capital market

for governmental and semi-governmental borrowings. In 1967 Australia owed Britain A\$750 million in government loans.¹²⁸ With Britain inside the EEC, Canberra was concerned that Australia's opportunities for government borrowing would be reduced.¹²⁹ Third, the Australian government also worried that under the Treaty of Rome Britain could find itself compelled to impose financial restrictions on the sterling area. Fourth, as a member of the EEC, Britain would be expected to treat its exchange rate policy as a matter of common interest, and this would imply close consultations with other EEC members. Canberra was concerned that, in spite of being the single largest holder of sterling balances, Australia would have less influence than the EEC members on a matter of considerable importance to the country.¹³⁰ Finally, as far as the sterling area concept was concerned, DTI officials felt that 'British entry into the E.E.C. would certainly have a deleterious effect'. Yet, they recognised that 'this may not mean much in practice. Since World War II, the sterling area has changed fundamentally ... This concept of a closely knit preferential group has now largely disappeared and the only preference which remains is in the field of capital transfers (and even here it is being progressively whittled away) and a few relatively unimportant current payments'.¹³¹

Table 4. Australia's sterling balances, 1955-66

	<i>Sterling</i> (A\$ m)	<i>Sterling% of total</i> <i>reserves</i>	<i>US dollar% of total</i> <i>reserves</i>
1955	679.4	80.4	4.5
1960	785.6	78.4	8.3
1964	1346.2	80.5	7.6
1965	994.5	73.4	11.3
1966	980.6	71.3	14.1

Source: NAA, A1209/84, 1967/7734 attachment 2.

9. The second round of Anglo-Australian consultations, September-October 1967

On 18 June, the day after Holt left London, Wilson flew to Paris for talks with de Gaulle. Wilson hoped that his visit would encourage the French President to take a less disruptive approach. French obstruction had prevented the application from being formally acknowledged by the EEC Council of Ministers until 5 June and, even then, it was acknowledged without any meaningful discussion. However, Wilson's personal diplomacy did not produce a breakthrough.¹³² As a result, the application failed to gather momentum. On 4 July, Brown momentarily managed to circumvent French obstructionism and presented the British case for entry at the WEU Council of Ministers.¹³³ On 3 October, the European Commission issued a Preliminary Opinion on British Membership, recommending that negotiations with Britain should be initiated.¹³⁴ Despite this, negotiations never started.

In this context, Anglo-Australian consultations on issues relating to British entry soon became marked by an air of surrealism. A second round of talks between Australian and British officials was scheduled for late September. The talks had been proposed by the Australians with a view to exploring 'the bases of future continuing bilateral relationship [sic] in the alternative situations of Britain gaining, or not gaining, entry to the E.E.C. on the present application'.¹³⁵ According to the Australian delegation, it was apparent from the beginning that the British 'were too damned frightened to speak about it [that is, retaining trade benefits in Australia] in case any of the discussion leaked and was capable of being used by the French as a reason for obstructing their application for entry'. This being the case, it was not surprising that the talks ended in disappointment on 4 October, following the

announcement that the Australian delegation had been recalled to Canberra. In spite of further talks between Westerman, the head of the Australian delegation, and his British counterpart Richard Powell on 16 October, differences between London and Canberra were not reconciled. In explaining his decision to recall the Australian team to the Cabinet, McEwen argued that 'Britain [was] so determined to maintain a position of willingness, even anxiety to join the E.E.C. that she [would] take no action at this stage that might appear as the slightest contradiction of that position'.¹³⁶

The *coup de grace* to Wilson's European aspirations was inflicted on 27 November. On that day, de Gaulle declared at a press conference that 'for the British Isles to be really able to tie up with the continent, a very vast and very deep transformation is still needed', thus dealing a fatal blow to Wilson's hopes of joining the EEC.¹³⁷ Notwithstanding the British Cabinet's decision to 'urge the Five to insist on fixing a date in January for the opening of the negotiations, and so force the issue with the French either on 18-19 December or at the beginning of January', French opposition could not be overcome. On 19 December, the EEC Council of Ministers concluded that the conditions did not exist for the application to proceed further.¹³⁸ The British bid was over for the second time.

In Australia, Britain's failure to open negotiations with the Six allayed local concerns about the economic consequences of the British application. Although no Australian now doubted Britain's resolve to join the EEC, this temporary set-back allowed the Australian farm sector more time to reduce its reliance on the British market and to find new outlets elsewhere. This seemed to remove an irritant in Anglo-Australian relations, but did not rejuvenate them. Britain's failed application did not end what Downer described as 'the story of disassociation, which has become

so marked in the last eighteen months'.¹³⁹ Rather, it was one further step in that direction.

10. Conclusion

This paper has examined Australia's policy towards Britain's second application to the EEC. In particular, it has shown how the renewed interest of the Wilson government in EEC membership from 1966 was a source of concern to Australia. Apart from the inevitable economic damage which would derive from British entry, the Australian government also worried about the strategic implications of Wilson's 'turn to Europe'. In fact, Australian policy-makers realised that Britain's entry was likely to weaken its resolve to play a politico-military role in Southeast Asia and, as a result, to hasten its departure from that region. So concerned was Canberra about this prospect that ministers agreed that in the event of a renewed British application Australia might 'go soft' and give Britain some trade benefits to toughen London's resolve to remain in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the paper has argued that the Holt government's response to Wilson's 'approach to Europe' was non-committal. A number of factors contributed to shaping the Australian attitude. One was the growing uncertainty over Britain's role east of Suez. Canberra was careful not to antagonise London on the EEC question as it felt this could drive a wedge between Australia and Britain at a time when London's goodwill was still required. A second factor was that France's unrelenting hostility to British entry rendered the outcome of the British bid uncertain. A further issue was the concern with avoiding exposure to British pressure for trade compensation if anything Australia did could be construed as an effort to block Britain's entry into the Community. A fourth and final factor was the government's desire to disguise the grim prospects for Australian agricultural exports from the Australian public were

Britain to join the EEC. Lastly, this paper has also shown that as Britain reoriented its policies towards Europe, Australian policy-makers realised that London would regard Australian concerns and interests as expendable.

Endnotes

¹ For brevity's sake, the term 'Britain', rather than the more accurate 'the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland', has been used throughout this paper.

² The term 'the Six' commonly refers to the six European countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany) which established the EEC and Euratom by signing the Treaty of Rome on 25 March 1957.

³ Uwe Kitzinger, *The Second Try: Labour and the EEC* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968); Helen Parr, *Harold Wilson, Whitehall and British Policy Towards the European Community, 1964-1967* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 2002); Oliver Daddow (ed.), *Harold Wilson and European Integration* (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

⁴ H.G. Gelber, *Australia, Britain and the EEC, 1961 to 1963* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1966); Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Stuart Ward, 'Sentiment and Self-interest: The Imperial Ideal in Anglo-Australian Commercial Culture', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 116, 2001, pp. 91-108; Stuart Ward, 'A Matter of Preference: the EEC and the Erosion of the Old Commonwealth Relationship', in Alex May (ed.), *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe: The Commonwealth and Britain's Application to Join the European Communities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 156-180; David Goldsworthy, 'Menzies, Macmillan and Europe', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 51, no. 2, 1997, pp. 157-169; John O'Brien, 'The British Commonwealth and the European Economic Community, 1960-63: The Australian and Canadian Experiences', *Round Table*, vol. 85, no. 340, 1996, pp. 479-491; Paul Robertson and John Singleton, 'Britain, the Dominions and the EEC, 1961-1963', in Anne Deighton and Alan Milward (eds), *Widening, Deepening and Acceleration: The European Economic Community 1957-1963* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999), pp. 107-122.

⁵ For Wilson's early policy towards the EEC see Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 1.

⁶ National Archives of Australia, Canberra (henceforth NAA), A1838/2, 67/1/3 part 3, Australian High Commission (henceforth AHC) London to Department of External Affairs (henceforth DEA), cablegram 7629, 10.11.64.

⁷ NAA, A1838/349, 67/1/1 part 7, AHC London to DEA, savingram ex. 46, 20.10.1964. See also NAA, A1838/275, 727/4 part 36, Cumes to Tange, memorandum EEC/45, 16.2.1965.

⁸ NAA, A463/50, 1965/2040, Bunting to Downer, 13.5.1965.

⁹ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1/3 part 2, AHC London to DEA, cablegram 11090, 7.12.1965. For a detailed account of British policy in late 1965 see Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 2.

¹⁰ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-70: A Personal Record* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 283.

¹¹ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 5, Renouf to Westerman and Currie, 1.4.1966.

¹² NAA, A1838/275, 727/4 part 36, Renouf to Westerman, 4.2.1966.

¹³ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 5, Currie to Renouf, 22.3.1966.

¹⁴ See Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace*, pp. 173-176.

¹⁵ Holt was sworn in as Prime Minister on 26 January 1966.

¹⁶ See NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Minutes of interdepartmental meeting on UK/EEC held in the Department of Trade and Industry, 7.6.1967. In September 1967 the Cabinet 'invited the Prime Minister to name a committee of Ministers for the purpose sought by the Minister [McEwen], and indicated that there might, with advantage, be also an inter-departmental committee keeping in touch with the course of negotiations'. NAA, A5840/XM1, vol. 2, Cabinet Decision 582, 19.9.1967. As Britain's negotiations with the EEC never got under way, these committees were never established.

¹⁷ See NAA, AA4092/T1, 79, Campbell to Currie, 31.5.1966; NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 4, Australian Embassy Brussels to DEA, cablegram 80, 17.3.1966.

¹⁸ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 5, Harry to DEA, 1.6.1966; Renouf to Hasluck, 2.6.1966.

¹⁹ NAA, A5839/XM1, vol. 1, Cabinet Decision 260, 5.5.1966.

²⁰ NAA, A1838/346, 727/4, Record of conversation with Mr. Campbell, Assistant Secretary (DTI), 8.6.1966.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² In this paper 'east of Suez' refers to a vast area stretching from the Persian Gulf to Hong Kong. Southeast Asia denotes a strategic sub-region of the larger 'east of Suez' area which included the British bases of Singapore and Malaya/Malaysia and where the Wilson government's policy of withdrawal most affected Australian security.

²³ This point is discussed in more detail in Andrea Benvenuti, *The End of the Affair: Britain's Turn to Europe as a Problem in Anglo-Australian Relations, 1961-72* (D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, submitted on 5.3.2003), ch 4.

²⁴ PRO, Cabinet Office (henceforth CAB) 133/329, AMV(66)3rd meeting, 11.7.1966.

²⁵ NAA, A1838/1, 792/1 part 4, Holt to McEwen, cablegram 6856, 11.7.1966.

²⁶ PRO, CAB 133/329, AMV(66)3rd meeting, 11.7.1966.

- ²⁷ NAA, A1838/1, 792/1 part 4, Holt to McEwen, cablegram 6856, 11.7.1966.
- ²⁸ PRO, CAB 133/329, AMV(66)3rd meeting, 11.7.1966.
- ²⁹ PRO, CAB 129/127, C(66)149, 7.11.1966. See also Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 3.
- ³⁰ Snelling quoted in NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 6, Commonwealth Liaison Committee Meeting on Britain and the Common Market, 4.1.1967.
- ³¹ Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 3; Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders Since 1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 311.
- ³² Wilson, *Labour Government*, p. 352. However, according to Pimlott, Brown's appointment as Foreign Secretary seems to have been dictated by Wilson's desire to neutralise the influence of Callaghan within the Cabinet. See Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 435-436. According to Parr, while Wilson's decision 'indicated his willingness to endorse a shift in European policy', 'managing his ministers' remained his 'priority in the paranoia generated by the July crisis'. Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 3.
- ³³ See Pimlott, *Wilson*, p. 438. See also Douglas Jay, *Change and Fortune: A Political Record* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 365-366.
- ³⁴ See Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp. 434-435.
- ³⁵ NAA, A3211/21, 1967/575 part 1, Bassett to Westerman, 9.11.1966. See also Wilson, *Labour Government*, p. 352.
- ³⁶ PRO, CAB 128/41, CC(66)53rd meeting, 1.11.1966.
- ³⁷ PRO, CAB 128/41, CC(66)55th meeting, 9.11.1966.
- ³⁸ Britain, *Parliamentary Debates* (henceforth PD), House of Commons (henceforth HC), 1966-67, vol. 735, cols. 1539-1540.
- ³⁹ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1/3 part 3, Lloyd to Acting Secretary (DEA), memorandum 1370, 28.11.1966.
- ⁴⁰ PRO, FCO 62/16, Eur(0) (66)11 (Final), Timing and method of consultations with other Commonwealth countries, 30.11.1966; Snelling to Garner, 5.1.1967.
- ⁴¹ PRO, FCO 62/16, Commonwealth Office (henceforth CO) to British High Commission (henceforth BHC) Canberra, Telegram Y circular 2, 12.1.1967.
- ⁴² See for example NAA, A1838/275, 727/4 part 36, Renouf to the Acting Minister, 24.3.1966; Osborn to Plimsoll, memorandum 122, 31.1.1966. See also NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1/3 part 3, Lloyd to Acting Secretary (DEA), memorandum 1370, 28.11.1966.
- ⁴³ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, Critchley to DEA, savingram 1, 22.12.1966.
- ⁴⁴ Australia's trade relationship with Britain was based on a system of mutual trade concessions, known as the Ottawa Agreement, which Britain and its dominions had negotiated at the Ottawa Imperial Economic Conference in 1932. Under the Ottawa Agreement, Britain and Australia were committed to protect their reciprocal trade interests in their respective economies and to accord each other's exports preferential treatment in their own markets. By the mid-1950s, 40

per cent of Australian exports to Britain received preferences in comparison with 80 per cent of British exports to Australia. Some Australian commodities such as lamb, mutton, wool and wheat, while receiving no preference at all, could still enter the British market freely. See Sandra Tweedie, *Trading Partners: Australia and Asia, 1790–1993* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1994), pp. 99–100. In 1956, however, believing that the Ottawa Agreement was working significantly in Britain's favour, the Menzies government had sought its renegotiation. In spite of falling short of Australia's expectations, a new agreement was signed in Canberra in November 1956. Its main features were the continuation of preferential trade between the two countries, an across-the-board cut in the margin of preference on British exports to Australia, a reiteration of the 1952 meat agreement committing Britain to purchase all Australian beef, and a non-binding clause whereby Britain endeavoured to buy 750,000 tonnes of Australian wheat each year. See Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 35–37.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, Critchley to DEA, savingram 1, 22.12.1966.

⁴⁶ NAA, A1838/269, TS899/1/4 part 2, Cabinet Submission 1183, 26.6.1961.

⁴⁷ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, British Entry into the EEC, undated paper (probably January-February 1967).

⁴⁸ Benvenuti, *The End of the Affair*, ch. 5.

⁴⁹ NAA, A1209/80, 1966/7335 part 3, Downer to Holt, cablegram 5326, 3.5.1967.

⁵⁰ NAA, A1209/80, 1966/7335 part 3, Australian Embassy Washington to DEA, cablegram 1995, 11.5.1967.

⁵¹ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 6, Australian Embassy Rome to DEA, cablegram 76, 17.1.1967.

⁵² PRO, CAB 129/128, C(67)33, 16.3.1967.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, Harry to DEA, savingram 3, 10.2.1967.

⁵⁵ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 1, External Affairs Office London to DEA, savingram 4, 1.2.1967.

⁵⁶ See for instance NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 7, Australian Embassy The Hague to DEA, cablegram 104, 28.2.1967.

⁵⁷ NAA, A1838/2, 727/4/1 annex, Walker to DEA, Despatch 1, 28.2.1967.

⁵⁸ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 1, Bunting to Knott, 10.2.1967.

⁵⁹ NAA, A1838/375, 727/4/2 part 6, Harry to DEA, savingram 3, 10.2.1967.

⁶⁰ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, Pomeroy to Thomson, 23.2.1967.

⁶¹ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, DEA to Australian Embassy Brussels, cablegram 93, 29.3.1967.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 6, Shann to Harry, 23.3.1967.

⁶⁴ See for instance NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, McEwen to Holt, cablegram 4808, 25.4.1967.

⁶⁵ See Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 5.

⁶⁶ PRO, CAB 129/128, C(67)33, 16.3.1967.

⁶⁷ Wilson quoted in Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 5. See also PRO, CAB 128/42, CC(67)14th meeting, 21.3.1967.

⁶⁸ PRO, CAB 129/128, C(67)33, 16.3.1967.

⁶⁹ The pro-EEC camp was led by personalities such as George Brown and Roy Jenkins. Opposition to a British application centred around the left-wing Tribune Group and the 'global patriots'. The leader of the Tribune Group, Michael Foot, and more in general, those on the left of the Party condemned the EEC as a capitalist organisation that did not advance the interests of labour. In their view, EEC membership was contrary to Labour's economic planning and socialist traditions. As for the 'global patriots', who were led by Peter Shore and Douglas Jay, their pro-Commonwealth stance was combined with a belief in free trade. In their opinion, the EEC was an inward-looking and protectionist bloc that would hamper prospects for economic development across the wider world. According to Anne Deighton, these contradictions in the Labour Party were reflected in Cabinet arguments over the second application. See Anne Deighton, 'The Labour Party, Public Opinion and the "Second Try" in 1967', in Oliver Daddow (ed.), *Harold Wilson and European Integration: Britain's Second Application to join th EEC* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 42-44.

⁷⁰ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, United Kingdom-E.E.C., 24.2.1967.

⁷¹ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, McEwen to Holt, cablegram 4808, 25.4.1967.

⁷² For an interesting account of how the Wilson Cabinet reached the decision to apply see Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 5.

⁷³ Cmnd. 3264, *Membership of the European Communities* (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 4.

⁷⁴ PRO, CAB 129/129, C(67)59, 24.4.1967.

⁷⁵ PRO, CAB 129/129, C(67)63, 25.4.1967.

⁷⁶ PRO, CAB 128/42, CC(67)23rd meeting, 27.4.1967.

⁷⁷ PRO, CAB 129/129, C(67)63, 25.4.1967.

⁷⁸ PRO, CAB 128/42, CC(67)23rd meeting, 27.4.1967.

⁷⁹ PRO, CAB 129/129, C(67)63, 25.4.1967.

⁸⁰ PRO, CAB 128/42, CC(67)23rd meeting, 27.4.1967.

⁸¹ Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, *Australia in the International Economy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 234 and 244. According to Dyster and Meredith, from 1961 to 1969-70 the average annual rate of real economic growth was 5.36 per cent.

⁸² NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Johnston to Holt, 24.4.1967.

⁸³ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Lawler to Holt, 27.4.1967.

⁸⁴ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Bunting to Munro, 23.4.1967.

⁸⁵ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Lawler to Holt, 27.4.1967.

⁸⁶ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, Holt to McEwen, cablegram 3245, 24.4.1967.

⁸⁷ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7117 part 2, DEA to AHC London, cablegram 3360, 28.4.1967.

⁸⁸ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Notes of discussions with Sir Alan Westerman (Geneva), 15-16.5.1967.

⁸⁹ 'Wind and Tide', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9.5.1967.

⁹⁰ NAA, A1209/43, 1967/7208, Knott to Bunting, 12.5.1967.

⁹¹ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/1 part 8, Walker to DEA, cablegram 1741, 3.5.1967. The Five were West Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

⁹² For de Gaulle's speech see Kitzinger, *Second Try*, pp. 179-188.

⁹³ See Wilson, *Labour Government*, p. 505.

⁹⁴ Snelling quoted in NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Canadian High Commission (London) to Canadian Department of External Affairs, telegram 2721, 19.5.1967.

⁹⁵ Kitzinger, *Second Try*, p. 52.

⁹⁶ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Canadian High Commission (London) to Canadian Department of External Affairs, telegram 2721, 19.5.1967.

⁹⁷ See again Snelling quoted in *ibid*.

⁹⁸ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Rooke to Bunting, 9.5.1967.

⁹⁹ PRO, FCO 20/47, Official Committee on Approach to Europe. Britain and the EEC: Brief for Consultations with Australian Officials, 2.6.1967.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, FCO 20/47, Snelling to Garner, 5.6.1967.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*.

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- ¹⁰² PRO, FCO 20/47, BHC Canberra to CO, telegram 823, 22.5.1967.
- ¹⁰³ PRO, FCO 20/47, Consultations with Australian Officials: first session, 6.6.1967.
- ¹⁰⁴ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, AHC London to DEA, cablegram 7262, 9.6.1967.
- ¹⁰⁵ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, DEA to Fleming, cablegram 4800, 2.6.1967.
- ¹⁰⁶ PRO, FCO 20/47, CO to BHC Canberra, telegram 1247, 9.6.1967.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* As for wool, a major source of foreign earnings, it was to remain unaffected by British entry.
- ¹⁰⁸ PRO, FCO, 20/47, Short Report on talks with Australian officials on EEC, undated.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ PRO, FCO 20/47, CO to BHC Canberra, telegram 1222, 6.6.1967.
- ¹¹¹ PRO, FCO, 20/47, Consultations with Australian Officials: second session, 8.6.1967; Short Report on talks with Australian officials on EEC, undated.
- ¹¹² PRO, FCO 20/48, Euro (67)74 (Final), Draft brief for talks between the Prime Minister and Mr. Holt, 8.6.1967.
- ¹¹³ PRO, FCO 62/10, Shannon to Snelling, 15.5.1967.
- ¹¹⁴ PRO, Prime Minister's Office (henceforth PREM) 13/1323, Memcon, Wilson and Holt (London), 15.6.1967.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* See also NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, AHC London to DEA, cablegram 7766, 17.6.1967.
- ¹¹⁶ PRO, PREM 13/1323, Memcon, Wilson and Holt (London), 15.6.1967.
- ¹¹⁷ The Common Market issue was cursorily discussed by Cabinet on 2 May 1967. See NAA, A5840/XM1, vol. 1, Cabinet Decision 290, 2.5.1967. Previously, the ministers had shortly canvassed the Common Market issue on 5 May 1966.
- ¹¹⁸ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, McEwen to Holt, cablegram 514, 8.6.1967.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁰ The Committee included George Brown and those Cabinet Ministers most directly concerned with the British application – Callaghan, Peart, Bowden, Jenkins (Home Secretary), Stewart (now Secretary of State for Economic Affairs) and Jay. Ross (Scottish Office) and Chalfont (Minister of State for Foreign Affairs) were also included.
- ¹²¹ PRO, FCO 20/38, Gallagher to Thomson, 28.9.1967.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, Prime Minister's brief, May 1967, UK-EEC: Australian negotiating position, 20.5.1967.

¹²⁴ NAA, A4092/T1, 78, Memcon, Westerman and Downer (Canberra), 23.2.1967. For an analysis commodity-by-commodity see NAA, A4092/T1, 85, United Kingdom-EEC consultations 1967, undated.

¹²⁵ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4 part 37, Thomson to Hamilton, 25.5.1967.

¹²⁶ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4 part 36, White to Thomson, 28.1.1966.

¹²⁷ NAA, A1838/275, 727/4/2 part 7, British entry into the EEC, undated position paper (probably February 1967).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Until the mid-1960s Australia had depended on the Bank of England to arrange a prompt reconversion of government loans through preferential access to the British money market. Australia was concerned that this kind of arrangement would no longer be possible once Britain entered the EEC. Thus, Australia would be confronted with the prospect of repaying debts out of its reserves.

¹³⁰ NAA, A1209/84, 1967/7334 attachment 2, Australia's sterling balances and financial implications for Australia of British membership of the EEC. Trade and economic brief for visit to the US, Canada and the UK by the Prime Minister, Harold Holt, May-June 1967.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² See PRO, CAB 128/42, CC(67)41st meeting, 22.6.1967. See also Parr, *British Policy*, ch. 6.

¹³³ See *ibid.* In order to by-pass French obstructionism, Belgian Foreign Minister Hermel had suggested that the Foreign Secretary present Britain's case at the WEU Council on 4 July.

¹³⁴ 'Opinion on the Application for Membership Received from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Norway for Submission to the Council under Articles 237 of the EEC Treaty, 205 of the Euratom Treaty, and 98 of the ECSC Treaty', quoted in Kitzinger, *Second Try*, pp. 205-299.

¹³⁵ PRO, FCO 20/50, Westerman to Powell, 7.8.1967.

¹³⁶ NAA, A10206, EHEC03, Cabinet Submission 504, 12.10.1967.

¹³⁷ Kitzinger, *Second Try*, pp. 311-317.

¹³⁸ Text of the communiqué issued by the Council of Ministers, 19.12.1967, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 319.

¹³⁹ PRO, FCO 20/50, Speech of Sir Alexander Downer at the Royal Commonwealth Society (Bath), 11.10.1967.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

About the Author

Andrea Benvenuti recently completed a PhD in International Relations at Oxford University and will soon take up a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Queensland. His thesis, entitled "The End of the Affair: Britain's Turn to Europe as A Problem in Anglo-Australian Relations, (1961-72)", examined Australian responses to Britain's attempts to join the EEC and its decision to withdraw militarily from East of Suez. Dr Benvenuti is the author of articles on Australian foreign policy, Anglo-Australian relations and South Asian security affairs.

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