

MR FRASER :

¹⁶It will be my sole purpose as head of the government to restore responsible management to Australia's affairs, and to ensure that Australia has the General Election to which it is constitutionally entitled and which has so far been denied it. ¹⁷Until the judgment of the Australian people has been registered at this election, my government will make no appointments or dismissals, nor initiate any of our policies. ¹⁸I have ((written to the Governor-General in)) the following terms:

¹⁹Your Excellency,

You have intimated to me that it is your Excellency's pleasure that I should act as your chief adviser and head of the government. ²⁰In accepting your commission, I confirm that I have given you an assurance that I shall immediately seek to secure the passage of the Appropriation Bills, which are at present before the Senate, thus ensuring Supply for the carrying-on of the Public Service in all its branches. ²¹I further confirm that, upon the granting of Supply, I shall immediately recommend to Your Excellency the dissolution of both Houses of the Parliament. ²²My government will act as a caretaker government, and will make no appointments or dismissals, or initiate new policies, before a General Election is held.

²³Once the Senate made its decision, there was only one appropriate course of action for Mr Whitlam to take: he should have called a General Election. ²⁴He refused to do so. ²⁵I deeply regret that he did not take the opportunity open to him. ²⁶A week ago we proposed that Mr Whitlam undertake to hold elections, for the House, at the same time as the next Senate election, which must be before the end of June. ²⁷He rejected that offer. ²⁸This morning I called on Mr Whitlam with my colleagues to discuss with him arrangements for a General Election. ²⁹These discussions were fruitless. ³⁰In these circumstances, the Governor-General was left with no alternative. ³¹He has acted in accordance with *his* duty, under the Constitution, and withdrawn Mr Whitlam's commission. ³²In accordance with *my* duty, I have today advised Sir John Kerr to dissolve both Houses of the Parliament, so that the people themselves can decide what government *they* want for Australia. ³³Before the Parliament was dissolved, the Budget was passed. ³⁴None of the dire consequences that were threatened by the Labor Party will now occur. ³⁵Money for government employees and government services will now flow normally. ³⁶I have today issued written instructions to the Public Service as a whole, that all the government's outstanding debts should be paid, as soon as possible. ³⁷The Liberal and National Country Parties took the action we did after three years of grossly incompetent and damaging economic mismanagement, and after the second man who had acted as Prime Minister had been deviously dismissed for deceiving the Parliament. ³⁸Under these circumstances, we believe that the people of Australia ought to have the chance to exercise *their* right to *judge* — to judge the Labor Party, and to judge ourselves. ³⁹Our action has been taken to give people *their* right to *vote*. ⁴⁰Those few extremists urging conflict and division are damaging Australian democracy. ⁴¹I believe that responsible people everywhere will support the reasonable and rational approach that we have adopted. ⁴²There will now be an election as the Constitution requires. ⁴³The great defence of our democracy is that the Constitution must be upheld. ⁴⁴The Australian people will have *their* say; the choice is theirs, at the ballot box.

REPORTER 1 : ⁴⁵When will the election be, Mr Whitlam? (sic)

MR FRASER : ⁴⁶As soon as can be arranged, but there are some courtesies to be observed before.. actually announcing the date.