This is Malcolm Fraser in Canberra.

With the first series of wool sales in Portland held last week our attention is once again firmly fixed on the prices being received.

This is a time of great worry for many of us. There are few encouraging signs in the market. I notice that some prices topped 100 cents per kilo — others however were down to 46 cents. We can all clearly remember when these prices were being received per pound.

However we do have the backstop of the Wool Deficiency Payments Bill which has now gone through the second reading in Parliament.

Although I dealt with this scheme several weeks ago in detail I know many of you may still be not clear on the way the deficiency payments will be made. So I will deal with this important subject again.

I would also like to give a summary of the main provisions outlined in the comprehensive statement on the Commonwealth Education Program for this year which I delivered to Parliament.

In essence the Wool Deficiency Payments Bill, as you all know by now, provides a minimum average price for the Australian wool clip of 36 cents per lb. The only exception is the estimated 10 per cent of very low grade wools. The prices received for these are included in reaching the average, but they are not eligible for subsidy payment.

In practice, the Australian Wool Commission will average out prices at the end of each week of wool auctions. The difference in the actual proceeds received and what they would have been had an average price of 36 cents per lb. been paid will be calculated as a percentage.
Every grower who sold wool at that week’s auction will then be eligible for an increase in the price he receives by that percentage. In other words if the total wool receipts are 20 per cent lower than the set figure, all prices will be increased by 20 per cent.

This means that the growers of finer wools will get a higher cash return than growers of coarser wool — who do however, have the benefit of the higher carcass price.

The Deficiency payment scheme covers wool sold between the second of July this year and the 30th of June 1972.

Brokers will forward to the Australian Wool Commission a list of their clients who sold wool at auction during each particular week, showing the amount of deficiency money to be paid. The Commission, acting as an agent for the Commonwealth Government, will then make the payment to the broker for forwarding to each particular grower.

It is important to remember that poor grade wools, mostly the K wools, do not attract subsidy. But because their prices are included when working out the average price — the 90 per cent of the clip which is eligible for subsidy in fact has a basic price of nearly 39 cents per lb.

The success of this method of payment obviously depends on the active cooperation of everyone concerned, — brokers, registered classing houses, wool merchants, and agents who export wool or sell wool by tender on behalf of producers. These must all be registered, which is done on application, with the Department of Primary Industry.

It is our earnest hope that by the combined efforts of this Deficiency Payments Scheme, and the operation of the Australian Wool Commission in the auction room, returns to woolgrowers will be lifted by more than one hundred million dollars over last year’s total receipts.
The Education of our children is always of great importance. That this is well recognised by the Commonwealth Government is shown, I believe, by the fact that this year a total of 345 million dollars will be spent directly on education throughout Australia.

This is in addition to the money spent by the States themselves ... an amount estimated this year to exceed 1-thousand 2-hundred and 50 dollars.

Both these amounts, the Commonwealth's and the State's, are considerably more than the expenditure last year. The largest increases in single items will be in payments to the States for Universities, Colleges of Advanced Education, and Teachers Colleges.

These figures are contained in the comprehensive Ministerial Statement on our Education Program for 1971-72 which I delivered to the House of Representatives several days ago.

The area of Commonwealth Scholarships to assist students has received considerable attention. By the end of next year the number of students holding these scholarships will have grown to 71-thousand. The number of Scholarships available for Advanced Education rises from 2-thousand-5-hundred, to 4-thousand.

The role of independent schools in our educational system will continue to be encouraged and supported. Grants to these non-Government schools will total 31 million dollars this year. The Government believes that parents must have the right to choose whether to send their children to Government or Non-Government schools.

The quality of education cannot of course be measured merely in terms of money spent. We recognise that even more important than equipping students to meet future technological change is the need for a community comprising men and women with high human values. We must constantly re-define our education goals to ensure that they are effectively oriented towards these objectives.