A week or two ago, the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr. Sinclair, issued what amounted to a progress report on a survey of the Australian beef cattle industry by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Field work on the survey has been completed in all southern States except Victoria, and is about to commence in northern Australia. The field work in Victoria is planned for later this year.

The new survey covering the last four financial years will provide the industry and the Government with valuable information on the levels of producers' incomes, the degree of dependence of these incomes on beef cattle production, and on movements in production costs, productivity and other related factors. The survey is financially supported by the Australian Meat Research Committee and has been endorsed by the Australian Agricultural Council.

There's no doubt that rural producers are turning increasingly to beef cattle production as a means of improving their incomes. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics has recently published a report entitled "Beef Cattle on Australian Sheep Properties" which has a real bearing on Western Victoria. It shows that a significant and growing proportion of the total beef cattle industry is represented by beef production on sheep properties.

Over the years 1967-68 to 1969-70, Australian beef cattle numbers rose from 14.7 million to 17.9 million, a 22 per cent rise.
Over the same period, the number of beef cattle run on sheep properties rose from an estimated 5.2 million to 7.7 million, a rise of 47 per cent. By comparison, sheep numbers rose from 167 million to 180 million, a rise of only 8 per cent. By 1959, beef cattle numbers on sheep properties accounted for about 40 per cent of total beef cattle numbers in Australia, and subsequent estimates made by the Bureau indicate that for 1971-72, this figure has increased to about 45 per cent.

The survey will be valuable in that it will accurately document the economic and financial situation of producers in the beef cattle industry. It is information like this that is essential for any future planning of the industry.

Moving from beef cattle to another rural industry, I would like now to touch on work the C.S.I.R.O. is doing to tackle a major problem it has - the storage of wheat.
Wheat is a big and competitive business, and grain export regulations, stimulated by exacting customers, ensure today that export consignments do not have unacceptable levels of insects or pesticide residues.

These changes, and the world-wide appearance of insect strains resistant to the chemicals commonly used to protect stored grain, make a review of current research work in the C.S.I.R.O. divisions of entomology and mechanical engineering timely.

Resistance to the chemicals used to protect grain in storage is causing concern here and in other parts of the world, and it is this problem of resistance that is currently being investigated at the C.S.I.R.O. Long Pocket laboratories in Brisbane.

The division is seeking non-chemical means of protecting stored grain and, if it is successful, it should also overcome the problem of toxic residues in treated grain.

The efficiency of air-tight storage has been considered, but it seems that, to achieve satisfactory control of weevils by sealing the grain bins, the cost was too great. The division has also tried to flush air from a storage using inert gases. In another effort to find a non-chemical method of insect control, division officers have examined the practice of "turning" the grain for research has shown that mechanical disturbance hinders, or even stops, the insects' development.
And so the C.S.I.R.O. works towards the practical solution to the problems of wheat storage. The importance of their work to the nation cannot be overestimated because it is becoming increasingly apparent that on the international wheat markets of the future there will be a premium placed on quality grain.

In the few remaining minutes, I will touch briefly on education which is, of course, my specific area of responsibility in the Federal Government.

This week, the House of Representatives is debating, among other things, the State Grants (Capital Assistance) Bill, the enabling legislation implementing the undertaking of the Prime Minister last December to provide the States with an additional $20 million specifically for Government primary and secondary school construction. This is being hailed in the States as a most significant break-through as it is the first time a grant for this particular purpose has been made.

Then last month, at the Premiers Conference, the Commonwealth granted the States further additional funds. At the time the Prime Minister made it clear that the increased loan funds would permit the carrying out of additional worthwhile public works projects such as schools. The Tasmanian Government has disclosed it will spend 37 per cent of its additional works and housing allocation on education, Victoria about 30 per cent, and New South Wales nearly 20 per cent. The Queensland figures are not available.