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REACTION TO TASMANIAN BUSHFIRES

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Holt

The loss and suffering from the bushfires in Tasmania has produced a spontaneous sympathetic and helpful response in many parts of the world.

Messages and gifts continued to arrive during the weekend.

The gift of \$50,000 from the British Government was a warm-hearted and generous donation. In addition, there have been so many enquiries from people in London wanting to make private donations that funds have been opened at both Australia House and Tasmania House. The New Zealand Government has already announced a gift of \$25,000 for the Tasmanian Relief Fund.

In addition to last week's messages from The Queen, Princess Alexandra, who is to visit Australia shortly, has expressed her sincere sympathy to all those Tasmanians who have experienced loss of any kind.

Among other messages delivered this weekend was the following from President Johnson :-

"I have been saddened to hear of the tragic loss of life and property in Tasmania resulting from the disastrous bushfires raging there. I speak for all Americans when I express to you our profound sympathy for the people of Tasmania and all Australians who have suffered as a result of this misfortune."

Countries to express their sympathy to the Tasmanian bushfire victims include Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, India, Israel, Portugal and Sweden.

All Australians, and Tasmanians in particular, will be touched by the warmth of sympathy and ready expression of help.

While I shall be acknowledging these messages officially, I would like to say publicly how much the Australian Government appreciates these gestures.

Officers of my Department have spent the weekend examining ways in which the Commonwealth can be of most help to Tasmania. Plans for Commonwealth assistance will be discussed at the Premiers' Conference in Canberra this week.

CANBERRA,
12th February, 1967.