

FOR PRESS

P. M. No 20/1970

COMMONWEALTH CYCLONE ASSISTANCE

There has been an exchange of telegrams between Queensland and the Commonwealth today in relation to Federal Government assistance in the wake of Cyclone Ada.

The following telegram was received from the Queensland Premier, Mr Bjelke-Petersen

"FOLLOWING MY PERSONAL INSPECTION OF CYCLONE ADA DEVASTATION AND OFFICIAL REPORTS IT IS APPARENT THE EFFECTS OF THIS CATASTROPHE ARE OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS AND THE RESULTANT AMOUNT OF PERSONAL DISTRESS AND HARDSHIP OF A MUCH LARGER SCALE THAN IN RECENT SIMILAR DISASTERS. I AM SURE THIS WILL BE CONFIRMED BY YOUR NAVY MINISTER AND OTHER COMMONWEALTH SOURCES. MY GOVERNMENT GREATLY APPRECIATES AND ACCEPTS YOUR OFFER OF DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR ASSISTANCE CONVEYED YOU TELEGRAM OF 19TH JANUARY AND I WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD URGENTLY CONFIRM THAT THE SCOPE OF THIS ASSISTANCE WILL INCLUDE IN ADDITION TO PERSONAL DISTRESS RELIEF, ESSENTIAL REPAIRS TO HOUSES AND THE REPAIRING OR REPLACING OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS OF FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO PROVIDE REASONABLE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR THOSE WHO DUE TO LACK OF ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES WOULD OTHERWISE SUFFER PERSONAL HARDSHIP. I WOULD ADD THAT THE DAMAGE SUSTAINED BY GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITY BUILDINGS AND INSTALLATIONS APPEARS TO BE COMPARABLE TO THAT OF THE 1967 NORTH QUEENSLAND FLOODS AND THE 1958 BOWEN CYCLONE AND CONSIDER AMPLE JUSTIFICATION EXISTS FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND SIMILAR FINANCIAL AID IN THIS REGARD ON THIS OCCASION. I WOULD STRESS HOWEVER THAT URGENT CONFIRMATION OF HOUSE REPAIR ASSISTANCE WOULD BE APPRECIATED. RE MY SECOND REQUEST IF ANY DETAILS OR INFORMATION ARE REQUIRED TO ASSIST YOUR CONSIDERATION I SHALL BE HAPPY TO FURNISH THEM PROMPTLY."

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This is the reply sent by the Prime Minister, Mr. Gorton, late this afternoon . . .

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR REPORT WHICH CONFORMS WITH REPORT GIVEN TO ME BY MINISTER FOR NAVY.

I CONFIRM THAT COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE OFFERED IN MY TELEGRAM OF 19 JANUARY FOR THE RELIEF OF DISTRESS INCLUDES MAKING ESSENTIAL REPAIRS TO HOUSES AND REPAIRING OR REPLACING ESSENTIAL ITEMS OF FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO PROVIDE REASONABLE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR THOSE WHO, DUE TO LACK OF ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES, WOULD OTHERWISE SUFFER HARDSHIP.

TO ASSIST CONSIDERATION OF YOUR REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN THE RESTORATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS, PLEASE ADVISE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ESTIMATED COST OF THE DAMAGE. "

CANBERRA
22 January 1970