



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 478
2 April 1975

AUSTRALIAN AID TO REFUGEES IN INDO-CHINA

The Prime Minister, and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, announced today a further contribution of \$A 1 million for relief work among refugees in Indo-China.

He said that this sum had been offered to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.H.C.R.). It was additional to the \$200,000 announced on 28 March for the Indo-China operational group of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The grants would assist U.N.H.C.R. relief and rehabilitation projects for refugees in all parts of Indo-China. U.N.H.C.R. was one of the international humanitarian organisations qualified to assist refugees on both sides of lines of military control in Indo-China. The funds could be used by U.N.H.C.R. to purchase food, medical supplies and other commodities if necessary from Australia.

Australian aid for the activities of these organisations in Indo-China during the current financial year now totalled \$2.35 million.

He had earlier decided to make available seven Hercules transport aircraft together with other aircraft currently based at Butterworth for use in an humanitarian role in Vietnam.

The task of the aircraft was to ferry supplies and materials intended to meet immediate and critical human needs.

He had also given approval for the use of R.A.A.F. aircraft for the transport from Vietnam of orphans for whom adoption formalities had been completed in Vietnam and Australia, and for whom prospective Australian parents were waiting. He had asked for the co-operation of the State Premiers in speeding up the processes for admission of these children to Australia. (See Attachment)

As he had indicated on 28 March, the Government was keeping the situation under continuing review and he believed that further generous Australian help could be expected if such were necessary.

Over and beyond these immediate humanitarian actions, the Australian Government reaffirmed its commitment entered into within weeks of assuming office over two years ago to contribute generously to the reconstruction of post-war Indo-China.

ATTACHMENT

Text of a message sent by the Prime Minister earlier today to each State Premier:

"You will be aware of my Government's concern that Australia should play its part in helping to alleviate the hardship and suffering now being endured by the people of South Vietnam.

The adoption by Australian parents of numbers of Vietnamese children has been a note-worthy aspect of our past contribution to the relief of this suffering in the past and I should therefore be grateful if in the light of the rapid escalation of the human problems in South Vietnam in recent days you could now ask your regulatory authorities to make special efforts to finalise as expeditiously as possible decisions on applications by residents of your State for permission to adopt Vietnamese children.

The Australian Government for its part will endeavour to facilitate the entry of such children for whom approved parents are selected and whom South Vietnamese authorities have granted authority to leave.

E.G. WHITLAM"

CANBERRA, A.C.T.