



PRIME MINISTER

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NOT DELIVERED BY PM.

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL OPENING

Today's ceremony is not only an act of faith by the Church of England. In its own way, this project symbolises Darwin's recovery from Cyclone Tracy, and the determination to build a better city.

It reflects the faith of the citizens of Darwin in the future. There must have been many who doubted whether Darwin could ever rise again after the devastation of the cyclone. It is a measure of the determination of the former residents of Darwin and their affection for the city that so many have returned to help in the rebuilding.

I understand that the population is now only 8000 short of what it was on Christmas Eve 1974. The loss of the old Christ Church was one of the sad losses of the disaster. It had been one of Darwin's oldest buildings- it had stood for 72 years when the cyclone struck. In its building it had symbolised the diversity of people who had built Darwin. Its stone had been hewn by Chinese. Now a new cathedral church is being commenced, but it will have links with the old Darwin. The ruins of Christ Church will be incorporated in the new cathedral complex.

I hope that the new church which will rise on this site will be a vital part of the new city. It will seat 300 worshippers and provide facilities for community activities, conferences and wedding receptions.

I understand also that some thought is being given to setting up a cathedral choir school as part of this church complex. Fund raising appeals will be launched next month in the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia to help meet the cost of building the new cathedral church. I urge strong support for these appeals. I am sure they will be supported.

I am very conscious that it is the wish of the people of Darwin that the city should be rebuilt as quickly as possible.

People throughout Australia want to see Darwin rise again - and soon. That is certainly the wish of the Commonwealth Government. Through the efforts of citizens, private enterprise, the Housing Commission and the Reconstruction Commission the city is once more taking shape.

The result of the efforts of individuals and private enterprise in rebuilding Darwin are plain for all to see. Nearly 2000 residents have commenced rebuilding their homes, 250 have already completed them. Most business premises have been restored - the recent auction sale of industrial land in Darwin suggests that private industry has confidence in the future of the city.

The kind of city the new Darwin becomes will depend, in the end, on the commitment, the work, the willingness to cooperate of the people of Darwin. Government, can, and is, helping to establish the framework for the new city. It can offer aid and assistance. It can help to ensure that the physical development provides a decent context for the life of the people. But the new Darwin, like the old, will in the end be the product of the people who live in it, and their attitudes to one another.

The Federal Government is determined, for its part, to do what it can to see that the rebuilding of Darwin proceeds as quickly as possible.

To aid this process we have increased the financial assistance for reconstruction in the next financial year. We believe that all Australians wish to see this done. I believe that the Commonwealth Government's funding of the Darwin Business Relief Loan Fund and the concessional 6 percent home rebuilding scheme have helped to inject confidence into the city. I hope it will not seem too much out of place on an occasion such as this if I mention some of the details, financial and otherwise, or what has been done and what is proposed.

The opportunity for me to mention these matters directly to the people of Darwin comes all too rarely. Nearly \$3.5 million of low interest loans has been advanced to 223 small businesses to boost commerce and industry. Approvals for the home rebuilding scheme have now passed 500, with a total value of \$14.7 million. During the current financial year the people of Australia, through the Darwin Reconstruction Commission will have spent \$110 million. I have been advised by my colleague, Mr Adermann that this will rise to \$139.5 million next year.

Three new homes a day are now being completed for the Reconstruction Commission. The rate of construction will accelerate in the months ahead. More than \$16 million has been spent since Cyclone Tracy on weather proofing and repairs to private and government buildings and on cleaning up the debris and making damaged homes safe.

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission is also responsible for the restoration and upgrading of the whole range of government services a community like Darwin needs, including the new Casuarina Hospital.

\$44 million has been spent this financial year on new and rebuilt homes. \$5 million has been spent on education facilities and \$8 million on public health and welfare.

The city's basic infrastructure and community facilities have largely been reestablished. We are all indebted to the members and staff of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission.

A major contribution in overcoming the accommodation problem in Darwin is also being made by the Northern Territory Housing Commission.

In 1975/76 the Commission was provided with \$13 million.

In 1976/77 this will rise to \$21.2 million. The Housing Commission has commenced construction of 360 new houses. 100 have already been completed. 105 flats have been commenced, 49 are completed. Permanent repairs have begun on 118 houses. In addition, the Northern Territory Port Authority has spent \$1 million this financial year rehabilitating and upgrading Darwin's port facilities.

The amount that is being spent on the reconstruction by the people of Australia - through Government and through private activities - shows the priority we all place on having a new city here that we can all be proud of.

Darwin, of course, has a new role to look forward to with the movement of the Territory towards statehood. We are moving quickly to give effect to this undertaking. A Bill to amend the Northern Territory (Administration) Act has already been introduced into the Federal Parliament. When enacted this Bill will pave the way for the transfer of executive powers to the Legislative Assembly.

My colleague the Minister for the Northern Territory is in regular contact with the majority leader, Dr Letts, and the executive members of the Assembly. I am confident that the Legislative Assembly will soon assume responsibility for a number of functions of Government in the Northern Territory.

The success of these measures will depend very largely on the good will and common sense of our Federal and local legislators and administrators. It will also depend significantly on the development of commercially viable industries which will generate incomes and revenue within the Northern Territory.

The potential and the Territory is exciting. Within weeks of assuming office, the Minister for the Northern Territory ended a long period of stagnation and frustration in the minerals area by issuing new mining exploration leases and offshore permits.

The development of the region's minerals depends very much on our ability to contain inflation and rising costs. Possibly not part of Australia has been more adversely affected by inflation than the Territory. The Government is determined to restore economic responsibility to Australia and to our relations with our trading partners, the natural markets for our minerals and metals as well as our agricultural and pastoral exports.

The Territory unquestionably has a great future. The rebirth of Darwin shows what is possible where people commit themselves to a goal and dedicate themselves to realising it. Great tasks like this are never easy. The work is often frustrating and difficult. I doubt if anything that is worthwhile can ever be otherwise.

I started off by talking about an act of faith by the Church of England. We all share a faith that by cooperating together we can build a country which will ensure decent lives for all its people. The new cathedral complex will be a symbol of that cooperation between people that we all seek.

I congratulate all who are associated with the rebuilding of the Church.

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