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THE WORLD REFUGEE YEAR.

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. J. McEwen, M.P.

"This year will be known as the World Refugee Year. This Sunday, 28th June, has been set aside as a day of prayer for the refugee and for the dedication of the concept of the World Refugee Year." Stating this today the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen, asked Australians to remember the refugee in their prayers.

"The concept of the World Refugee Year originated in the United Kingdom in April 1958, when attention was drawn to the major international problems of the refugees who are the continuing tragedy of our time. To-day there are in Europe more than 160,000 refugees and these are being added to daily. In the Middle East there are one million Arab refugees; in China, 10,000 refugees of European origin, and in Hong Kong at least one million Chinese refugees.

"To focus international attention on the plight of these people, it was proposed that the World Refugee Year should serve as the medium for an all out effort to solve their problems.

"Member Governments of the United Nations and its specialised agencies were urged to co-operate in promoting the World Refugee Year as a practical means of securing increased assistance for refugees throughout the world, and the Secretary-General was requested to take such steps as he saw fit to assist in the promotion of the World Refugee Year.

"Australia's role in the World Refugee Year has recently been considered by the Commonwealth Government. As a result, a National Committee for the World Refugee Year Appeal has been formed under the auspices of the United Nations Association of Australia, which in close co-operation with other interested organisations, has agreed to organise a public appeal for funds. The Australian Government will contribute £50,000 towards this appeal, whilst we are also taking appropriate steps to make public donations allowable deductions for income tax purposes as from 1st July. The purpose of this appeal is a most worthy one and I have no hesitation in commending it to you.

"The Australian Government has already brought to these shores more than 234,000 refugees making us, on a population basis, the leading country of resettlement for refugees. The World Refugee Year presents an opportunity for us to add further to this impressive record.

"I am confident that you will all wish to be associated with this humanitarian task."

CANBERRA, A.C.T.
27th June, 1959.