

HOBART FLOOD RELIEF

Statement by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen

The Acting Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen, today sent the following message to the Tasmanian Premier, the Hon. E.E. Reece:

"On behalf Commonwealth Government I wish to express our sincere regret at serious damage occasioned by floods in Tasmania and deep sympathy for all who have suffered so grievously. Mr. Townley has impressed the Government with the seriousness of the disaster and raised the question of Commonwealth assistance and I also have your telegram of today's date.

Consistent with the approach in other major disasters the Commonwealth will contribute pound for pound with State finance for relief personal hardship and distress on usual conditions. Also in line with assistance given in other major disasters Commonwealth is willing to make a contribution on a pound for pound basis towards restorations necessary as a result of damage to public roads, bridges, etc., and our officials would wish to consult as soon as convenient with your officials on needs under these headings with view to an early advance by Commonwealth."

The Minister for Defence, Mr. Townley, said in Canberra tonight that he was encouraged by the sympathetic attention given by the Commonwealth to Tasmania's problems. He was also pleased at the prompt reaction. He said: "The Tasmanian Premier, Mr. Reece, has been informed by the Acting Prime Minister, Mr. McEwen, of the details of the Commonwealth assistance". Briefly the Commonwealth will share equally all amounts expended by the State Government for immediate relief of personal distress and hardship. Secondly the Commonwealth on the same basis will share the cost of restoring bridges, roads etc.

This is in line with practices adopted by the Commonwealth in all major disasters and will undoubtedly ease the burden on the State especially as planning can now proceed without delay.

CANBERRA,
26th April, 1960.