

BUSH FIRES IN VICTORIA

and

ADDITIONAL FLOOD RELIEF IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

The tragic bush fires in Victoria have shocked us all, and I extend my sympathy to those who have suffered bereavement, loss of their homes or personal distress in other ways.

I have received a request today from the Acting Premier of Victoria, Mr. Rylah, through Senator Gorton, for Commonwealth financial assistance and I have replied as follows :

"You have requested Commonwealth grant towards cost of providing relief to persons in distress as result of disastrous bushfires. On behalf of Commonwealth Government I wish again to extend deepest sympathy to all people affected by this disaster. We are readily prepared to join with your Government in contributing towards the cost of a scheme designed to provide for the immediate relief of persons in distressed and necessitous circumstances. I assume that at the earliest opportunity you will furnish details of the damage and provide an estimate of the cost of relief measures. Meantime Commonwealth funds will be made available if required on the usual conditions, namely (one) £ for £ with State Government (two) the joint funds are used only for relief of personal hardship and (three) expenditure is in due course certified by State Auditor-General."

In November last, the Commonwealth made a grant of up to £30,000 on a £ for £ basis with the State of New South Wales for the relief of personal hardship resulting from the recent serious floods in New South Wales.

The Premier of New South Wales, Mr. Heffron, has now informed me that additional funds will be needed for this purpose and he has asked the Commonwealth to provide a further £20,000 to match a similar amount to be made available by the State. We have agreed to provide a further grant of up to £20,000. as sought by the Premier.

CANBERRA,  
18th January, 1962.