

FOR PRESS:



PM. No. 2/1968

ABANDONMENT OF PORTSEA SEARCH

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon John McEwen

The Prime Minister, Mr McEwen, announced today that the organised search for the late Mr Harold Holt would cease tomorrow (Friday) following advice given yesterday by the Victorian Government.

The Victorian Government said the Chief Commissioner of Police, after consultation with representatives of other organisations participating in Portsea Search, advises that it is the opinion of all concerned that it is quite hopeless to pursue search further.

It was with the deepest regret, said Mr McEwen, that the Commonwealth Government had agreed that there was no purpose in continuing the search any longer. Every area where any clue to Mr Holt's disappearance might be found had been searched thoroughly many times.

The search over the past eighteen days had extended westward to Barwon Heads and eastward beyond Cape Schanck. It had covered extensively Cheviot Bay and other ocean beaches, the Point Nepean headland and the bayside beaches in proximity to the Rip.

The Search operation had been co-ordinated by the Victorian Police and had included the Navy, Army and Air Force, civil aircraft, a number of Commonwealth and State organisations, volunteer forces and members of the general public.

Everything had been done in an effort to establish the fate of Mr Holt.

A helicopter search and beach patrols had been maintained this week but would now be withdrawn on Friday.

"I take this opportunity once again", said Mr McEwen, "of publicly thanking all those who responded so promptly and have given their time to this exhaustive and continuous search."

CANBERRA,
4th January, 1968