



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS:



PM No 5/1972

AWARD OF GEORGE CROSS (POSTHUMOUS)

Statement by the Prime Minister, Mr William McMahon

Her Majesty The Queen has approved that the George Cross be awarded posthumously to the late Errol John Emanuel in recognition of the conspicuous courage he displayed as District Commissioner for the East New Britain district of Papua New Guinea.

As Deputy District Commissioner at Rabaul from July 1969 and later as District Commissioner for the East New Britain District, Mr Emanuel was engaged in the arduous role of influencing deeply hostile groups of the Tolai people to discuss their difficulties in a peaceful and tolerant atmosphere. Even when tension was at its highest, he visited villages by day and night, almost always alone, to talk personally to leaders of all groups to gain their confidence and trust.

On a number of occasions, between March and the date of his death in August, 1971, involving public confrontations and imminent violence between police parties and large groups of people, Mr Emanuel displayed outstanding courage. On each occasion Mr Emanuel deliberately left the cover of police protection and, regardless of his own safety, moved among the people in order to pacify them. Each time he was personally responsible for avoiding possible bloodshed or loss of life. He never wavered from his task, choosing to expose himself to danger rather than risk the lives of his fellow officers and the police, culminating in his ultimately death on 19 August 1971 while carrying out his official duties.

Mr Emanuel's sustained acts of conspicuous courage over a long period in circumstances of extreme danger and in complete disregard for his personal safety were in the highest traditions of bravery and sacrifice carried out beyond the call of duty.

(Attachment.)

CANBERRA

17 January 1972

BACKGROUND:

Errol John (Jack) Emanuel joined the Papua New Guinea Administration on 24 August 1946 as a Patrol Officer. He served with distinction in the Papua, Mainland and Island areas of Papua New Guinea and spent more than 9 years between 1956 and 1965 as Assistant District Officer and Deputy District Commissioner working among the Tolai people in the East New Britain district.

In July 1969, he was posted to Rabaul as Deputy District Commissioner and was appointed District Commissioner for the East New Britain District in March 1971 until the date of his death on 19 August 1971.

The award of the George Cross to the late Mr Emanuel is the 9th award to an Australian over the past 25 years, the most recent being in 1965 to the late Chief Petty Officer J. Rogers for his outstanding courage during the "Voyager" disaster.

Mr Emanuel was born at Enfield, N.S.W., on 13 December, 1918, and is survived by his widow and three children (including a son and a daughter from an earlier marriage).

His first wife died in 1965 and his widow is now residing in the Brisbane suburb of St Lucia.
