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AUSTRALIAN AID TO INDO-CHINA

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, today announced a further stage in the Government's plan to contribute to the post-war reconstruction of all countries in Indo-China.

Mr Whitlam said that Australia's first consignment of aid for North Viet-Nam had now been shipped by the chartered vessel "Cosmos" and was expected to reach Haiphong early next month. The shipment was valued at \$600,000 and comprised 70,000 kilos of wool and 760 tons of roofing iron. Mr Whitlam said the recently established Australian Embassy in Hanoi would be in a position to discuss further requests for aid.

In reaffirming the Government's decision to participate generously in aid programs for Indo-China, irrespective of the politics of the people concerned or their Governments, Mr Whitlam recalled that Australia had already given \$US250,000 to the Indo-China Operations Group of the International Red Cross for humanitarian aid for the whole of Indo-China and a further \$250,000 to UNICEF to assist maternal and child welfare.

Mr Whitlam also gave details of Australian aid for South Viet-Nam, and outlined proposals for Laos and the Khmer Republic.

In South Viet-Nam, he said, most of Australia's aid was being directed to projects such as town water supply schemes, which were regarded as a major factor in improving public health.

Current projects included the provision of Australian equipment and engineering assistance in the development of water supply schemes for Da Nang and Vung Tau. The projects would be developed over the next six years with Australia contributing \$6.7 million in the Da Nang scheme and \$3 million at Vung Tau.

Another \$3.5 million was being provided to South Viet-Nam's National Water Supply Agency and \$1.6 million to the Saigon Metropolitan Water Office, in the form of pipes, fittings and ancillary equipment.

Mr Whitlam added that provision had been made in the current financial year for Australia to give more aid to Laos for irrigation, forestry and educational projects, and to the Khymer Republic for irrigation, flood control and electric power projects.