



PRIME MINISTER

16 May 1974

ASSISTANCE TO STATE OF VICTORIA TO ALLEVIATE FLOOD DAMAGE

The Prime Minister, Mr E.G. Whitlam, announced today that as a result of reports of extensive flooding in Victoria he had urgently telegraphed Mr Hamer offering financial assistance for the alleviation of personal distress and repair of damage. Mr Whitlam also announced that the Australian Defence services had been requested to provide whatever assistance could be given to alleviate the effects of the flood.

"I am saddened and distressed to hear that a soldier has drowned whilst engaged on flood relief operations. Such tragic accidents compound the already grave distress caused by floods", Mr Whitlam said.

Mr Whitlam went on to say that in a letter to all Premiers dated 27 February he had outlined the arrangements for financial assistance from the Australian Government to the States in the event of natural disasters. Mr Whitlam said that the offer which he made in that letter applied in the case of the current Victorian floods. The offer to Victoria includes financial assistance, on a dollar for dollar basis, for the immediate relief of personal hardship and distress. As well, under these arrangements the Australian Government meets the whole cost of approved rehabilitation and restoration measures in Victoria above a base cost of \$3.5 million.

Mr Whitlam said that the expenditure covered by his Government's offer included the provision of emergency food, clothing and accommodation, essential items of furniture and personal effects of those in needy circumstances as a result of the floods.

The Prime Minister said that tomorrow he would break his return journey from Melbourne to Sydney and tour the affected areas and, in particular, the Seymour area so as he could see the extent of the damage and the hardship being suffered by those affected.

Canberra
