

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER DR J.F. CAIRNS

The Acting Prime Minister Dr Cairns said today he had been in communication with the Director-General of the Natural Disasters Organisation, Major General Stretton. General Stretton advised Dr Cairns that in his opinion the emergency situation in Darwin was at an end and that it was appropriate that the administration of the city be handed back to the normal authorities.

General Stretton advised Dr Cairns that Darwin was secure and was functioning in an orderly way. Dr Cairns said he had authorised General Stretton to make the arrangements necessary to hand over to the administrator of the Northern Territory, Mr Jock Nelson, and to make the arrangements necessary for General Stretton and his staff to leave Darwin.

"The work of General Stretton has been a great credit to himself and to his staff," Dr Cairns said. "A tremendous amount has been achieved in a shorter time than could be expected. I express to General Stretton and to his staff the gratitude of the Australian Government and of the Australian people."

Dr Cairns said he was satisfied with General Stretton's advice to him that the job of the N.D.O. had been done and that the normal authorities could resume responsibility in Darwin.

CANBERRA
31 December 1974.