



PRIME MINISTER

The Acting Prime Minister, Dr J. F. Cairns, released the following statement after today's Cabinet Meeting in Sydney.

The Cabinet today considered the distribution of funds donated by the people of Australia to assist the people of Darwin.

The Prime Minister in his statement of 30 December, 1974, indicated that the Government was concerned to ensure that the money so readily donated by sympathetic and concerned Australians was distributed in a responsible manner, to relieve the hardship of the people of Darwin, recognising that the majority of them are no longer in Darwin.

The Cabinet noted that a Committee has been formed comprising representatives of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Aborigines, the women and children of Darwin, the Australian Council of Churches, and of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the City of Darwin Corporation, and Government institutions.

The committee will be responsible for the distribution of funds channelled into it.

Commenting on today's Cabinet meeting, the Acting Prime Minister Dr J. F. Cairns, said the Australian Government would assist the Committee to the full, not only in co-ordinating the activities of the Committee with the activities of Government Departments, but would also ensure that the funds are used for the purposes for which they were donated.

Dr Cairns said that while he understood the desire of Darwin's political leaders to exercise responsibility in the use of donated funds, the matter could not be left to them alone. This was partly because the majority of Darwin's residents are not in Darwin at all, and partly because there can be much duplication in the distribution of funds unless the Committee handling the funds is aware of all allocations made by Government Departments, voluntary bodies, and others.

Similarly, some persons could be left out altogether.

Dr Cairns stressed the positive and non-political stand taken by himself, the Australian Government, and the Leader of the Opposition and called on all concerned to re-establish the spirit of co-operation that has prevailed so far throughout Australia.

Dr Cairns said the Australian Government did not require that funds be handed over to it, nor did it want to deprive local political leaders of a full role in deciding what is done. But equally, he said, the Government would not abdicate its own responsibilities, not only to Darwin residents, still in Darwin, but to the majority of them who are elsewhere.

"I say to Darwin political leaders, to Premiers, Mayors, sponsors of funds and to all others: Let us work together in ensuring that the generosity of the Australian people is properly used for the benefit of the people of Darwin."

7 January, 1975

Note: Donations etc collected in various Darwin appeals can be sent to Mr John McDonald, Executive Officer, Darwin Relief Appeal, Darwin; or to the Minister for the Northern Territory, Parliament House, Canberra.

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