



PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 481
3 April 1975

VIETNAMESE CHILDREN

The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, said today that the Government of the Republic of Vietnam had agreed to facilitate arrangements for Vietnamese orphans to come to Australia.

In a special message to State Premiers, Mr Whitlam repeated his appeal for the States to finalise as expeditiously as possible decisions on applications for permission to adopt Vietnamese orphans. Children would be flown from Saigon to Australia by the R.A.A.F. as soon as the States gave certain guarantees about their adoption and child welfare procedures in relation to the orphans who would go to their States.

In his message to the Premiers, Mr Whitlam said:

"The Australian Government is in close touch with the Government of the Republic of Vietnam through the Australian Embassy. That Government has now advised my Government that it is prepared to facilitate arrangements for the exit of orphan children. There is, however, as yet no precise figure on the number of children in Vietnam for whom Australia is intended as destination. We also have advice that in some cases children will not be accompanied by documentation normally required for adoption. I am however in the present critical circumstances prepared to accept this situation. There remains one further problem: that we have no way of guaranteeing prior to the orphans' departure that their physical and medical condition will be such that they will necessarily be accepted by adoptive families. In these circumstances, therefore, I need your assurance that in the event that children destined for your State are not chosen for adoption by approved families your State will nevertheless receive those children and guarantee their accommodation and care..."

"I should be grateful, therefore, for your agreement that you will receive the number of children for whom there are approved families whatever their condition and that you concur in my Government's action in waiving the normal medical requirements.

I would also be grateful if your State authority responsible for adoption could maintain close liason with the Australian Department of Labor and Immigration in your State in the normal way for overseas adoption cases. Labor and Immigration, will, for its part, proceed as quickly as possible and keep in touch with the situation in Vietnam through our Department of Foreign Affairs."

TOWNSVILLE & CANBERRA

FAMILIES APPROVED AND AWAITING CHILDREN
FROM SOUTH VIETNAM FOR ADOPTION

NEW SOUTH WALES	77
VICTORIA	34
QUEENSLAND	8
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	100
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	2
TASMANIA	5
	<u>ACT 20</u>
TOTAL	226 246

FIGURES FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND IMMIGRATION AS AT
APRIL 3, 1975.

8.00 pm