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22

PRIME MINISTER

PRESS STATEMENT NO. 534
23 July 1975

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

The Australian Government has decided to initiate a special longitudinal survey of Vietnamese refugees who had recently settled in Australia, the Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam announced tonight.

The study will be carried out by Dr Jean Martin of the Australian National University. Dr Martin and her associates will interview the refugees at regular intervals over a period of about five years.

The survey would concentrate on those who had neither relatives nor friends here. It would record fully their experiences in making new lives in Australia.

Mr Whitlam said that if there had been Government follow-up studies of earlier refugee groups who had made their homes in Australia, the task of selecting refugees now would be easier.

Mr Whitlam said the study would encompass such things as

- . The refugees' reasons for leaving their own country;
- . Their social characteristics;
- . Their aspirations in their new homeland;
- . What Australian Government assistance in maintenance and welfare they requested, or needed, and received;
- . The problems they thought they might have to face in settling in Australia, and how these compared with the problems actually encountered;
- . The problems of culture and language difference they had to face, and what happened to their cultural identity in the process of re-settlement; and
- . To what extent - if at all - they suffered from racism.

Other factors which would emerge from the study would be employment patterns, the use made of qualifications and skills possessed by the refugees, their success in becoming integrated, and the time they took to become indistinguishable from the rest of the Australian community in their requirements of the Australian Government.

"This is the first time that Australia - without regard to racial origins - has offered resettlement opportunities to people displaced in Asia who had no identifiable connection with this country," Mr Whitlam said.

"In living up to her responsibilities in the international community, Australia accepted those considered most in need of humanitarian assistance and who were unlikely to be offered resettlement opportunities elsewhere."

CANBERRA A.C.T.