



PRIME MINISTER

20 February 1976
JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

In a joint statement issued today, the Prime Minister, Mr. Malcolm Fraser and the Premier of Queensland, Mr. J. Bjelke-Petersen, announced the implementation of a wide range of relief and restoration measures to assist those affected by the serious and protracted flooding experienced in many areas of Queensland recently.

The Prime Minister and the Premier said that their two Governments were working together in a co-operative and expeditious way to assist individuals, businesses and public authorities in need as a result of these floods. The agreed measures of assistance include:-

- . relief of personal hardship and distress;
- . special subsidies to primary producers towards the cost of fodder dropped by aircraft to stranded and starving stock in flooded areas on an emergency basis;
- . loan assistance on concessional terms to primary producers, small businesses, sporting bodies and charitable and church organisations for restoration and repairs;
- . transport concessions, in addition to the above, for primary producers;
- . assistance to public authorities for the emergency repair and protection of essential services; and

assistance for the restoration of State and local government assets damaged or destroyed by the floods.

Having regard to the particular circumstances arising from these floods it has been agreed that the scheme of assistance for the relief of personal hardship and distress should in this case comprehend, where appropriate, assistance in respect of essential repairs to owner occupied dwellings. However, this assistance will be subject to means test and to other appropriate conditions.

These measures are to be administered by State authorities and all enquiries on eligibility etc. should be directed to those authorities. The Commonwealth Government will, however, contribute towards the financing of the costs of the measures under established natural disaster assistance arrangements. Under these arrangements the Commonwealth Government meets the full costs of agreed measures necessitated by major disasters once the State has met an annual "base" amount from its own resources. For 1975-76 this base amount is \$2 million.

Expenditure in excess of that amount has already been incurred by the State this year in respect of earlier disasters & so that in practice the full costs of the agreed measures in this financial year will fall on the Commonwealth.

Details of levels of assistance are under consideration by our respective Treasurers, Mr Lynch and Sir Gordon Chalk and will be announced as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister and the Premier paid tribute to the work of Service personnel, the Natural Disasters Organisation , officers of the State emergency services and the many volunteers involved.