



PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AID FOR VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE VICTIMS

The Federal Government will provide direct and significant assistance to families hit following last weekend's serious bushfires in Western Victoria.

The Federal Government will assist in four key areas. The Government will:

- * Meet the full cost of the disposal and burial of dead and maimed stock
- * Provide special funds for replacement of boundary fences along highways and railway lines
- * Provide loans of up to \$15,000 to help meet the difference between insurance cover and the replacement cost of property
- * Remove a State Government restriction that specifies the transport of fodder by road is not subsidised if it comes within 40 miles of the disaster area.

A senior officer from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet held discussions with State officials on the spot on Saturday (February 12) so that unnecessary red tape could be avoided.

The Government has been concerned that aid gets to the area quickly, without fuss and without delay. This is being done, and agreement has been reached with the Government of Victoria.

The Hamilton office of Telecom have been working round the clock to repair lines and instal phones in many areas.

Four field officers from the Hamilton office of the Department of Social Security - including a social worker - have also been in Streatham and are providing much needed assistance in that district.

I wish to pay special tribute to the firefighters and relief workers who worked tirelessly over the weekend to combat the bushfire.

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The Commonwealth has a major role in the relief of natural disasters.

It provides funds for the immediate relief of personal hardship and distress at a dollar for dollar basis with the State Government. It also meets all State expenditure necessitated by major disasters in excess of a set figure which in the case of Victoria is \$3.5 million a year.

As well as personal hardship and distress, disaster relief covers grants for the restoration of Government, local Government and semi-Governmental assets and facilities.

It also covers loan assistance on concessional terms for primary producers to enable them to get back into operation.
