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PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4 1981

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND AIR PASSENGERS

- RELIEF FLIGHTS

With the completion of the last emergency relief flight between Australia and New Zealand today, I would like to pay tribute to the Air Force personnel and all others associated with the exercise, who worked hard and long hours to see it through successfully.

They have good reason to be well satisfied with their work.

All Australians have reason to congratulate the RAAF and the RNZAF on a job well done.

The Australian Government also appreciates the ready co-operation of the New Zealand Government in mounting and seeing through this exercise to bring home stranded Australians and New Zealanders. They would have faced long delays and hardships because of strikes in both countries.

When the last RAAF emergency relief flight leaves at 5pm AEST today, the airlift of stranded passengers will close down on both sides of the Tasman.

The backlog of passengers has been largely shifted from Australia and from New Zealand. It is expected that available commercial flights will be able to handle any remaining movements. In the course of the exercise the Royal Australian Air Force flew 27 round flights and moved almost 3,300 passengers across the Tasman.

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