



PRIME MINISTER

TOWNSVILLE AIR TRAGEDY

I wish to extend my deepest sympathy to the families of victims of the Townsville air tragedy.

The accident is a stark reminder of the risks taken by members of Australia's defence forces and their self sacrifice even in peace time.

That 18 members of one of Australia's elite forces should pay the ultimate price for service to their country in such circumstances is a matter of great sorrow.

The Defence Minister, Mr Ian McLachlan, is flying to Townsville early today and will report directly to me and the Federal Government on the circumstances of the accident and measures to assist relatives in their time of grief.

Every effort is being made to assist those soldiers who have survived this accident but remain on the injured list.

13 June 1996