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Minister for Foreign Affairs

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE TO CHILE

Following a formal request yesterday from the Chilean Ambassador, the Australian Government has decided on an initial contribution of \$1 million in emergency assistance in response to the massive earthquake that struck south of Santiago de Chile on 27 February.

Australia will provide emergency supplies including portable generators to provide power and lighting to affected communities.

Australia will also make an initial contribution of \$4 million in reconstruction assistance following detailed needs assessments by Chilean authorities.

We will coordinate our efforts with the Chilean authorities, the United Nations and other Latin American countries.

Australia is also considering sending a team of structural engineers to support the Chilean Government to carry out damage assessments on public buildings and infrastructure affected by the earthquake.

Late last night, I spoke to Chilean Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez to express Australia's condolences for the terrible loss of life and devastation caused by the earthquake.

I told him that thoughts of the Australian Government and people were with those affected by this tragedy.

Foreign Minister Fernandez expressed his gratitude for Australia's solidarity with and assistance to Chile and its people at this time.