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## INNISFAIL ADVOCATE MARCH 2011

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**Date: Tuesday 8 March 2011**

**For immediate release**

### **SPEAKING UP FOR YOU**

February was a very busy month. It was a month spent listening carefully to many of my constituents who have had their hearts broken, some for the second time in five years. It was also a month spent travelling throughout my electorate, visiting communities affected by Yasi to fully understand the challenges facing households, businesses and farmers in the wake of that terrible category five storm. I believe we have come along way, but that we still have a long way to go.

Most importantly, it was a month spent advocating on behalf of my constituents to the state and federal governments, in response to the needs identified as a result of that listening and that travelling. Issues such as securing temporary affordable housing, attracting additional health services and a range of pressing concerns about the financial assistance programs available to households, businesses and farmers, have been my top priority over the last five weeks.

Unfortunately, I have not been successful in securing all the things I have pursued in parliament. I have advocated for a fuel excise subsidy to be made available to households, businesses and primary producers to address the high cost of running generators for several weeks. I have also advocated for an assistance package for the transport industry, to guard against a sharp increase in the cost of living. The state and federal governments have not responded to these requests.

I welcomed the declaration of large areas of my electorate affected by Yasi as eligible for category C and D assistance under NDRRA. However, I believe it is becoming increasingly clear that the criteria for this assistance is now more strict than the programs offered to households, businesses and primary producers after Cyclone Larry. I am very concerned that fewer applications will be successful, which will mean less assistance can be accessed, thereby slowing our recovery.

The Queensland Reconstruction Authority was established by legislation following a debate in State Parliament on 16 and 17 February. The QRC has been charged with coordinating the recovery and reconstruction of the region affected by Yasi. During the debate, I nominated my public infrastructure priorities for communities in my electorate within the parameters of the legislation.

These included improved commercial and recreational boating infrastructure at Mission Beach, the redevelopment of the Tully Showgrounds, the rebuilding of Tully State High School, the delivery of affordable sewerage in Cardwell and the restoration and protection of the foreshore in Cardwell. I will continue to fight hard for the communities in my electorate during this recovery process.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage all of my constituents to this month support the upcoming Feast of the Senses. I strongly support the Feast of the Senses, which celebrates and promotes our local produce and producers. Check out the details at [www.feastofthesenses.com.au](http://www.feastofthesenses.com.au)

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