



HRE COLUMN MARCH 2011

Date: Thursday 10 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 faced and still are facing, enormous difficulties. It was also a month spent travelling throughout my electorate, visiting communities affected by Cyclone 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 pressing for financial assistance programs for households, businesses and farmers affected by Cyclone Yasi 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 priorities for projects in the Herbert River district within the parameters of the legislation, which are focused on increasing the capacity of our community to respond to future natural disaster events.

These included flood-free access over Palm Creek, relocating the flood prone Ingham Fire Station, improvements in local drainage infrastructure and improved access to the Ingham Airport. I will continue to fight hard for the communities in my electorate during this recovery process, which has been complicated and slowed by the extraordinary wet weather that has plagued our region.

I advanced these priority projects after the major flood event in the Herbert River district in February 2009, but unfortunately, they were not addressed. Our current recovery effort could have been considerably enhanced, had the Federal and State Government's responded accordingly.

Contact:	Andrew Cripps MP Member for Hinchinbrook	Address:	PO Box 1515 Ingham Qld 4850	Ph:	07 4776 1428
		E-mail:	Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au	Fax:	07 4776 3503
