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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**Date: Tuesday 5 April 2011**

**For immediate release**

### **CRIPPS HOPING FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE BOOST**

Member for Hinchinbrook, Andrew Cripps, has welcomed a report today that additional specialised mental health workers could be announced within weeks to support cyclone affected communities for up to two years after being devastated by Cyclone Yasi.

Mr Cripps said a report today that Cairns and Hinterland Mental Health Service Executive Director, Mr Kevin Freele, expected the announcement of additional mental health support services for cyclone affected communities in the near future, was very promising indeed.

“One of the matters I took up after Cyclone Yasi was the need for more mental health support services to be put in place in cyclone affected communities, not just in the short term, but in the long term, as individuals battled with the recovery process” said Mr Cripps.

“I met with Mr Freele at the Innisfail Hospital on Saturday 12 February 2011, nine days after Cyclone Yasi. We discussed the need for additional mental health resources to be brought in to cyclone affected areas for an extended period to support local communities” he said.

“I thank Mr Freele for following up on our conversation and I thank the CEO of the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service, Julie Hartley – Jones, for putting me in touch with Mr Freele. I welcome the news that what we discussed looks like being acted on” said Mr Cripps.

“The fact is that many people who were badly affected after Cyclone Larry have also been badly affected by Cyclone Yasi. It must be so very hard and intimidating for these people to have to start again five years after they last battled to put their lives back together” he said.

Mr Cripps said while many of his constituents would need to take advantage of the additional mental health support services immediately, others would need access to the service in the months to come, as they faced difficult circumstances following Cyclone Yasi.

“Cyclone related issues are placing real pressure on people’s relationships with family, friends and neighbours. Financial and legal problems are also widespread” said Mr Cripps.

“Coupled with the terrifying experience of going through the cyclone itself, people can crack under the pressure. I urge people to seek help and support if they feel they need it” he said.

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