



**ISSUE 2
MAR - APRIL 2011**

Hinchinbrook Central
86-92 Herbert Street, INGHAM, QLD, 4850
Post: PO Box 1515, INGHAM, QLD, 4850
E-mail: hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au
Website: www.andrewcripps.com.au
Phone: 07 4776 1428 Fax: 07 4776 3503
Local Call: 1800 810 656

NORTHERN BEACHES BULLETIN

Andrew Cripps MP State Member for Hinchinbrook
Proudly Representing Townsville's Northern Beaches

LOCAL ADF CONNECTION NEEDED DURING DISASTERS

Recently in State Parliament, I called for the establishment of a formal relationship between Local Disaster Management Groups and the Australian Defence Forces deployed to a particular area after a natural disaster, to ensure local priorities can be identified and addressed.

Many of my constituents in communities affected by Cyclone Yasi have asked me why the army had left town so quickly, when there was obviously still so much work to do that local residents would find difficult to undertake.

I want to praise the efforts of the ADF in my electorate of Hinchinbrook following the devastation caused by Cyclone Yasi. Its work was outstanding. It was done efficiently, quickly and thoroughly. In short, it was done in a very soldierly fashion. I thank the ADF sincerely.

The ADF followed the orders it had received to clear public access on major public roads and clear debris from public areas. Some people have suggested to me that local councils, or the LDMG, sent the ADF back to base too early, but that is not true. The ADF does not take any directions from local councils or from LDMG's. There is no formal relationship between LDMG's and the ADF during a disaster.

The formal relationship exists between the State Government and the Commonwealth Government at a higher level. I believe this is an inadequacy in the Disaster Management Act that should be urgently addressed urgently.

Last year, during the debate in State Parliament on newly re-drafted State Disaster Management legislation, I highlighted the fact that the Australian Defence Forces were not mentioned once in the new Disaster Management

framework, but nothing has been done since then to address the issue.

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POTENTIAL FIRE RISKS

Following Cyclone Yasi and the extended wet weather across North Queensland, there is a large potential fuel load within National Parks, on other state controlled land and areas of freehold property, on the Northern Beaches of Townsville.

In the event that our weather does improve and we have an extended dry season, the large volumes of fallen vegetation and the prolific grass cover, when it dries out, could contribute to a higher threat of bushfires and more intense fires, when and if, they occur. Preparation is the key to minimising risks.

Residents in rural areas are reminded that a fire permit is required from their local fire warden to burn off cyclone debris or any other large burning activities. To contact your local fire warden or to access more information about minimising the risk of fire causing damage to your property, you can call FIRECOM on 4750 1100 or go to www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au.

This is also a good opportunity for residents in rural areas to consider the importance of your local Queensland Rural Fire Service brigade, which is made up of very dedicated local volunteers. I would like to thank our Rural Fire Service volunteers and recognise the great work that they do for our local communities.

Rural Fire Service brigades are always looking for new volunteers to help keep the community safe. They provide a very important community service. I am sure that any support you can offer your local Rural Fire Service brigade, as a volunteer or otherwise, would be greatly appreciated.

LDMG's are made up of representatives from local civic leadership, emergency services, essential services and utilities. These representatives at the local level are best placed to identify and prioritise the resources of the ADF to tasks that confront the LDMG during its disaster response.

I believe that the initial request for support from the ADF should be made by the State Government to the Commonwealth Government. That is right and proper. However, once this request has been made, there needs to be a formal relationship between the ADF and the LDMG at the local level.

LABOR CYCLONE SHELTER PROMISE BLOWN AWAY

Another issue that I have been pursuing is the failure of the former Beattie Government and the current Bligh Government to keep its promise to the people of Queensland to establish cyclone shelters in communities between Bundaberg and the Torres Strait that are vulnerable to cyclones.

The former Beattie Government made a 2006 election commitment to deliver cyclone rated shelters to communities vulnerable to cyclones, but very few have actually been established.

I recently questioned the responsible Ministers in parliament about this issue. Surprisingly, I learnt that the government's policy was being reviewed. I was very concerned that Queenslanders had been left in the dark. No timetable for cyclone shelters promised within 100 days of the 2006 state election has been released.

What happened to this election commitment and why has his government failed to deliver? The Bligh Government suggested that the *Building the Education Revolution* buildings, recently built by the Federal Government's stimulus package, could be used as cyclone shelters, but the overwhelming majority of these structures are not cyclone rated.

Indeed, many of these are just large undercover areas with no walls, no toilets and no kitchens and are totally unsuitable for cyclone shelters. The Bligh Government has failed to honour its commitment to communities in Queensland that are vulnerable to cyclones.

More recently, the Bligh Government has insisted that it is committed to something called 'cyclone safety', but there is absolutely no detail about what this so called commitment means. This lack of detail does not bode well for North Queensland communities vulnerable to cyclones.

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION

Breaking and entering into private properties is one of the most common crimes and can occur at any time of the day or night. Marking your property helps to deter theft and provides proof of ownership of your valuables. It also assists police to identify and return stolen property to its rightful owner.

There are a number of ways to mark your property:

- Use an engraver. Engravers are available for loan, free of charge from your local police station. Seek advice before using an engraver as not all items are suitable for engraving.
- Use identification (ID) stickers on personal property and on windows and doors to deter potential offenders. ID stickers are available from your local police station.
- Use microdots. Microdots are a modern way of marking property for identification and home kits are available from selected retailers and suppliers.
- Keep photographic records of your property that cannot be engraved such as jewellery, works of art, collectables etc. Use a ruler or matchbox beside the object when photographing to help determine size.
- Keep a list of serial numbers, model numbers and features of your personal property on an Inventory List. Keep the list and any valuation certificates in a safe place in the event of any insurance claims.

Property identification involves marking your property with a unique personal code or your driver's licence number. It's recommended that you create your own personal code using your name, date of birth and state eg: Brandon Smith born 1 August 1974, living in Queensland would be **BS010874Q**. It is advisable to contact your local police station and advise them of your unique code after your property is marked.

For more information go to www.police.qld.gov.au.