




Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Tuesday, 8 March 2011

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE, DISASTER RELIEF

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (11.51 am): Today I want to discuss a serious issue of concern to the communities in my electorate of Hinchinbrook. I want to commence my remarks by praising the efforts of the personnel from the Australian Defence Force who came to North Queensland and to Far North Queensland and in particular to my electorate of Hinchinbrook following the devastation caused by Cyclone Yasi. Their work was outstanding. It was done efficiently, quickly and thoroughly. In short, it was done in a very soldierly fashion.

Moving throughout my communities in my electorate in the weeks following Cyclone Yasi, I have been asked the question a number of times why was the Army withdrawn from the cyclone area in a way that they felt was too quick. The answer is that the ADF had completed the tasks that it had received orders to complete. That is what soldiers do: they follow orders. The question has been asked by many of my constituents in cyclone affected communities why was the Army leaving town because it was so obvious that there was much more work to be done.

The ADF completed its prescribed tasks of clearing public access on major public roads and clearing debris from public areas. As I said, those soldiers did so efficiently, quickly and thoroughly in a soldierly fashion. Some constituents in my electorate have suggested to me that local councils or the LDMG sent the ADF back to its base, but this is not right. The ADF does not take directions from councils. More importantly, the ADF does not take any direction from local disaster management groups.

Last year during the debate on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I drew to the attention of the House and in particular the minister that, despite the bill being a complete redrafting of the act, it was silent on the issue of how the ADF fitted into the legislation pertaining to disaster recovery arrangements in Queensland. I table my contribution to that debate for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Speech, dated 2 September 2010, by Mr Andrew Cripps, member for Hinchinbrook, in debate on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill [\[4010\]](#).

The minister responded to my contribution advising that there were well-established protocols concerning requests for assistance from the ADF after a natural disaster and that those requests came from the state government to the Commonwealth government. The minister also confirmed that the nature of the request for assistance—that being the types of assistance requested in natural disaster declared areas—is made from the state to the Commonwealth. I table the response by the minister to my contribution during the second reading debate.

Tabled paper: Speech, dated 5 October 2010, by Hon. Neil Roberts, Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services in debate on the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill [\[4011\]](#).

The obvious issue that I want to address today is the lack of a formal relationship between local disaster management groups and the ADF during a natural disaster—a gap in the provisions of the recently overhauled legislation that I think is a clear inadequacy which should be urgently addressed. I sat in a local disaster management group meeting in a local council in my electorate during the recovery

process of Cyclone Yasi where the ADF liaison officer in attendance explained to the LDMG that the relationship for the direction of the ADF was between the state and the Commonwealth and that ADF personnel were unable to accept requested tasks from the LDMG directly. The LDMG, the local leadership of the community, had to submit requests through the district then on to the state which would then go to the Commonwealth and then come back to the ADF before a local need could be addressed. I think it is obvious that this is a deficiency in our disaster management legislation.

Local disaster management groups are made up of local civic leadership, local emergency services representatives, representatives from essential government services such as Queensland Health, and major essential utilities such as energy utilities. I think it is obvious that 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 response after the initial request has been made by the state to the Commonwealth. I believe that the structure of the new Disaster Management Act is appropriate, and the LNP supported the bill through parliament. I would just ask the Minister for Emergency Services to give consideration to clarification of the relationship between local disaster management groups and the ADF once the request has been made from the state to the Commonwealth.