



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Wednesday, 6 April 2011

CYCLONE YASI

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.54 pm): Nine weeks ago tonight, the furious winds from Cyclone Yasi were battering my electorate of Hinchinbrook. I want to discuss a range of issues relating to the recovery process that has been underway for the duration of those nine weeks. Firstly, I want to offer several compliments. The Ergon Energy crews that reconstructed, re-established and repaired the electricity distribution network throughout North Queensland following Cyclone Yasi were just terrific. Their efforts were extraordinary—in some cases brave—and I pay tribute to them.

I also thank the Minister for Community Services and Housing for taking on board my representations in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Yasi that temporary affordable housing was one of the most pressing issues that my electorate would face. Significant resources have been allocated to establishing temporary affordable housing in cyclone affected communities. This has ensured that many local residents have been able to stay in their local communities.

I also welcome news that significant additional mental health support resources will be deployed to cyclone affected communities. I thank the Deputy Premier, who was the health minister at the time, who listened to me carefully and sympathetically when I met with him in Innisfail soon after the cyclone and stressed the need for enhanced mental health support services. This request has been responded to, and I am pleased that the enhanced mental health support services will be for up to two years, reflecting the gravity of the situation.

I regret that not everything associated with the cyclone recovery process has been so positive. The NDRRA support package for small businesses and primary producers has been a great disappointment. It took seven weeks for the state and federal governments to sign off on the regulations to deliver the package and the eligibility criteria. After waiting for far too long, many small businesses and primary producers have been advised that they are not eligible for the grants, or that they cannot access the low-interest loans. The eligibility criteria to access the grants and the loans are stricter than those that were in place for the support package after Cyclone Larry in 2006. I cannot fathom why the state and federal governments have disadvantaged cyclone affected communities when the damage was so much more widespread and so much more serious. Undoubtedly, this increased bureaucracy and red tape is slowing our recovery.

Lastly, several problems are now emerging in relation to applications regarding the Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal. I want to stress that I have no complaint in relation to the eligibility criteria placed on rounds 1 and 2 of the PDRA. My concerns relate to the obvious lack of ground truthing undertaken in relation to a number of decisions by the PDRA to reject applications by a number of my constituents when their individual circumstances clearly make them eligible. I thank the member for Gregory and the member for Rockhampton, who are helping me to correct these errors. However, I urge the PDRA to put more effort into ground truthing their decisions on applications from Queenslanders in cyclone affected areas.

(Time expired)