



Speech by

**Mr M. ROWELL**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

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Hansard 3 March 1999

### **CYCLONE RONA**

**Mr ROWELL** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): I would like to highlight how Cyclone Rona has impacted heavily on the north Queensland and far-north Queensland coast. The inundation of areas on the coastal belt and strong winds have severely affected the viability of many coastal communities from Mossman to Ingham. Emergency services, local authority personnel and a whole range of volunteers worked around the clock to ensure the safety of life. The SES needs improved support by way of additional boats and up-to-date radios. Safe landing areas for helicopters where fuel can be accessed have to be identified and, in the case of emergencies, rigid protocols have to be questioned.

Emergency lighting should be provided at airfields that are strategically located in flood-free areas. Printouts on river heights from the recording stations are taking up to four hours to be received at the communication centres in shire offices. This is far too long with the modern technology that is available.

Crop losses are enormous. It is estimated that 60% of the banana industry and over 80% of the pawpaw industry have been seriously affected. Not only have the farmers been affected, but many workers depending on the farmers for a living have no jobs because of the decrease in cash flow. Many growers cannot pay for cleaning up operations.

Much of the sugar industry in the area has been battling with a decline in c.c.s. Crops have been blown over and, in some instances, uprooted due to cane grub damage. Other cane has snapped off at the base. Some varieties of cane have broken off at the top, which will result in side-shooting.

Time expired.

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