



Speech by

**Mr M. ROWELL**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

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Hansard 25 March 1999

**PRIMARY PRODUCERS, FAR-NORTH QUEENSLAND**

**Mr ROWELL** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.15 p.m.): The extremely wet conditions in far-north Queensland have had an adverse impact on many crops. The problems associated with Cyclone Rona have continued, with incessant rain deluging the coastline. People dependent on primary industries have suffered major losses in the banana and pawpaw industries, with their crops being flattened by wind and inundated by floodwaters. No doubt the sugar industry is facing enormous difficulties, with a disastrous season last year and low world prices now evident for this year's crop.

I am requesting the Premier to replicate the Central Queensland Job Initiative for workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the severe weather conditions. If it is good enough for the miners who had incomes of \$60,000-plus and are now picketing the Gordonstone mine in central Queensland to receive a Government contribution to a trust fund of \$200,000, the Beattie Government should provide a similar initiative for people who have lost their jobs through a natural disaster.

Workers have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. The impact of these conditions has sent a ripple effect right across the community. Experienced workers are hitchhiking out of the region, as their employers can no longer afford to provide jobs for them. The re-establishment of these crops could keep them in work. With three successive years of cyclones, farmers are already in the red and, in many cases, lack the ability to get going again. The Premier lost no time in supporting the striking miners. The same degree of support should be provided for struggling families in the north who are not able to tough it out.

Time expired.

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