



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disaster Mitigation

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: There is no doubt that Queensland is at the forefront of disaster management in Australia. My department's Counter Disaster and Rescue Services division has, through its Disaster Policy and Research Unit, put together a project team, including risk management experts and BHP Engineering, to conduct an Australia-first study. The study outcomes will have far-reaching benefits for local government in Australia and, potentially, New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific. The studies will help develop processes for disaster risk assessment for use in all local government areas. The \$400,000 project is being conducted in three Queensland cities vulnerable to natural disasters—Cairns, Mackay and Hervey Bay.

The Cairns component, towards which the city council is contributing \$50,000, is examining all hazards—cyclone, storm surge, flooding, earthquake and landslips—in Cairns and population centres to the south of the city. Taken from a general community perspective, it aims to establish community vulnerability and determine appropriate actions. The Mackay study, for which the city council contribution is \$50,000, will examine flooding and storm surge. Hervey Bay City Council is contributing \$20,000. The study will examine floods, storm surge and earthquake issues from the perspective of how these threats impact on community lifelines such as power, sewerage, food supply, transport and water supply. Emergency Management Australia is also contributing \$20,000. The studies will involve extensive consultation with key agencies, business and the general community.

This phase started recently in Hervey Bay and Mackay and continued in Cairns last week. A 1800 hotline to encourage community feedback has been established. That will continue until 5 September. Written submissions also are invited. The Department of Emergency Services will also help publicise the study to the general public, across Government and within stakeholder organisations.

At the completion of the project, each of the three councils will be given the results, including a range of mitigation options which can reduce the impact of disasters in their communities. Local governments across Australia will have an interest in the outcomes of this groundbreaking study. Effective mitigation can significantly reduce the cost of disasters in the community. Proof of mitigation is now also required by the Commonwealth for continued access to Natural Disaster Relief Arrangement funding for local governments. The project is part of the Queensland Government's disaster mitigation response. The outcomes will complement the work of the State Mitigation Committee—another Australian first and a body which has been applauded by Federal Minister for Finance and Administration and former New South Wales Premier John Fahey.

The committee, which met for the first time in April, will identify and then prioritise the State's disaster mitigation needs. State and local government have a long history of cooperation. The partnership will be enhanced through this committee to produce long-term benefits for Queensland.

Disaster mitigation planning is a major challenge. Queensland, in accepting that challenge, is leading the way for others to follow. The logical next step is to establish a national mitigation fund to help fund provision of the necessary infrastructure. Progress towards that goal has been slow because of an apparent reluctance from the Federal Government to accept that it must play a major role in this response. Queensland will continue to apply pressure towards this end.
