



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Thursday, 30 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry, Emergency Services

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 am): The grinding hard work continues by thousands of dedicated workers in the area affected by Cyclone Larry. In emergency services alone, more than 1,500 personnel have been involved in the relief effort so far. They include more than 100 staff from the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, 600 State Emergency Service volunteers, 100 Queensland Ambulance Service staff and 600 staff from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, of course, there have been hundreds of personnel from the Queensland Police Service, local councils, and state departments including Communities, Energy, Transport, Health and Public Works. The list goes on. I thank them all.

As well as our own volunteers, of course, there have been hundreds more volunteers and staff from organisations such as the Salvation Army, Lifeline, the Red Cross and St Vincent de Paul. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of agencies and their leaders who continue to make a huge difference to the recovery effort. I acknowledge shire employees, led by their mayors Neil Clarke of Johnstone Shire; Ray Byrnes, Eacham Shire; Jim Chapman, Atherton; Anne Portess, Herberton; Mick Borzi, Mareeba; Mike Berwick, Douglas; Joe Galeano, Cardwell; and Kevin Byrne, Cairns City Council. I acknowledge the Police Service personnel, and particularly the district disaster coordinator, Steve Wardrobe, and his team who have worked tirelessly to see that people were looked after. I acknowledge the Counter Disaster and Rescue Service, lead by Frank Pagano and regional director Wayne Coutts, and also the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. I take this opportunity to also express my appreciation to Peter Roberts, Chief Executive Officer of the Johnstone Shire, who works tirelessly day and night. He never got a proper night's sleep for the first week after the cyclone.

I thank these thousands of workers who have left comfortable homes behind, working to bring normality back to these communities. I extend my gratitude to each of their families, who have to keep a home running without their valued partner or family member. I say thank you, thank you, thank you. It is the many and random acts of kindness that you remember most from witnessing disasters like Cyclone Larry. Only two days after Larry hit, insurance company IAG showed the way for all insurance companies and had a caravan in the centre of town for people to start sorting out their claims. Well done, state manager Brett Robinson. Then there was the chef from Port Douglas who brought his own food, after working all day, and cooked for some 30 people at the TAFE shelter and then came back and did it all again the next night. Husband and wife team Vince and Lisa Cronin gave away beautiful coffee outside the Innisfail town hall. I thank Bruce Paige for the very substantial donation. I also thank the Barrier Reef Motel and their employees, who have been giving fantastic support to Ergon workers, providing cut lunches and meals round the clock. And a big pat on the back for Bunnings and Rod Caust, whose famous sausage sizzles have become part of the region's fundraising efforts.

Let me say again that the Queensland spirit of mateship and rolling up your sleeves in the tough times is once more on display throughout the cyclone region. Finally, and not least, I thank every person who has dug into their pockets to boost the Prime Minister's and Premier's Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal. We have a long way to go yet, but I am sure we are going to get there. With the spirit of Queenslanders and Australians, that area will come back bigger and better than ever.