



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Friday, 21 April 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Monica

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.56 am): Cyclone Monica has passed over Cape York and is now situated in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The latest advice from the bureau this morning is that the cyclone warning for the west coast of Cape York has been cancelled. Early this morning, the cyclone was situated in the gulf, 170 kilometres west of Aurukun. It has reconstituted as a category 3 cyclone, although it could intensify further as it tracks towards the Northern Territory. I wish them well.

The cyclone passed over the west coast of the cape yesterday as a category 2 cyclone. No injuries or significant damage were reported. There was also no report of injuries from the cyclone crossing the east coast of the cape as a category 3.

Yesterday I visited Lockhart River with the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien. This is a town only 30 kilometres from where the eye of the cyclone passed. The communities and residents there are coping very well and local councils have the situation well in hand. I was impressed with the preparedness and spirit of the people of Cape York. They are resilient people who are familiar with dealing with cyclones.

Mains power was restored in Lockhart River yesterday afternoon, with sewerage, water and other essential services back on line. Power has been restored to 50 homes in Coen on feeder lines. The landline phone network on the cape has also been restored. Numerous roads are blocked by storm damage and floodwaters but the Department of Emergency Services has logistical plans in place to resupply any areas that are cut off and to assist in re-opening roads. Yesterday, a rescue helicopter evacuated a family from Laura, where floodwater in their home was up to calf height on their legs. They were taken to Cooktown.

The Department of Emergency Services will continue to check on and resupply outlying communities and isolated homesteads. Several of those checks were done yesterday.

The heavy rain that Monica brought has caused some localised flooding in Cairns. Contingency plans are being developed should evacuations be necessary. Fortunately, though, the rain has eased overnight. Flooding is also a possibility in the western cape region, and this is being monitored.

Queensland's emergency management system is, once again, responding magnificently to a potentially deadly natural disaster. I sincerely thank all the Department of Emergency Services staff and volunteers in far-north Queensland who are working extremely hard and long hours—and the long storm and cyclone season is not over yet.