



Speech by

## Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 25 May 2006

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### **DISTINGUISHED VISITOR, ADDRESS TO THE HOUSE: GENERAL P COSGROVE**

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (11.30 am), by leave: It is with great pleasure that I welcome General Peter Cosgrove to address the parliament today on the rebuilding and recovery program being undertaken following Cyclone Larry. Cyclone Larry left a trail of destruction when it crossed the coast of far-north Queensland on 20 March 2006. Many people lost their homes, their livelihoods and their possessions. I was determined to ensure the rebuilding and recovery of the affected communities and that it began as quickly as possible so I asked General Cosgrove to lead the operation and recovery task force. He has done a magnificent job.

General Cosgrove immediately responded to my call for help and was on the ground in Innisfail four days after the cyclone hit. I make the point that he left his family and commitments and went immediately to that community. I cannot think of any other Australian who would have done it as quickly as the general did.

A lot of work has been done by General Cosgrove and the task force since that time. I have been receiving regular reports on progress, some of which I have tabled in this parliament. Some of the task force activities have included providing advice on the needs of affected communities, coordinating the actions of peak community and business organisations to ensure the most effective use of resources and skills and undertaking recovery action such as accommodation provision and on-the-ground community advice and assistance. General Cosgrove has done an extraordinary job in leading the recovery and rebuilding effort and as soon as he was appointed it engendered enormous confidence within the community.

As I mentioned in this House earlier this week, General Cosgrove will no longer be located in Innisfail full time from the end of next month, but he will continue to lead the recovery process and make regular visits to the region. I pay tribute to General Cosgrove and thank him and the other task force members, Sandy Hollway, the Hon. Terry Mackenroth, Ross Rolfe, the Director-General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who is also with us today, and John Mulcahy, the Deputy President of the Insurance Council of Australia, for their outstanding achievements so far.

This morning I outlined the reasons behind the cancellation of the benefit concert at Suncorp Stadium and the details of a \$250,000 payment which will be made to the relief appeal. I also tabled the suite of strategic documents that set out the task force agenda and key milestones and target time frames for the recovery process. As members can see from these documents, there is still a lot to be done. The people of far-north Queensland can rest assured that the task force will continue to do everything it can to help those who have had their lives thrown into disarray and get things back to normal.

I welcome General Cosgrove to the parliament today and hope his address will provide a unique opportunity for members to hear firsthand about progress in the region from a truly remarkable Australian, and that is exactly what he is. The general did address this parliament in a previous capacity. Parliament actually formally adjourned for that address. This is the first formal time, in the time that Mr Speaker and I have been in this parliament, that we have actually had someone address the parliament itself. I have been reliably informed by the Clerk that the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, attended once but actually sat in the chair the general is in but did not address the parliament. As far as we are aware, this may well be the first time that anyone has formally addressed the Queensland Parliament and I could not think of a better person to do it than General Cosgrove.