



Speech by

Hon. Robert Swarten

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Wednesday, 19 April 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry, Recovery Assistance

Hon. RE SCHWARTEN (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing) (10.07 am): Since the day Cyclone Larry struck four weeks ago, Public Works staff have been on the ground helping rebuild communities in north Queensland. In total, 150 Public Works employees, including Q-Build workers from across the state, have been diverted to Innisfail to assist with the rebuilding efforts. A full audit of all public owned buildings in the affected area is now nearing completion, including the 142 schools in the district.

In addition to this process, Q-Build has inspected 3,000 homes throughout the area. Q-Build is currently undertaking further inspections of homes where people have applied to the Department of Communities for structural assistance grants as their properties are uninsured and have sustained property damage.

Department of Housing staff have also been working around the clock helping people displaced by the cyclone. As previously announced, a housing task force has been established by the Department of Housing with representation from six other government agencies to provide a coordinated approach.

Around 700 people have been processed into emergency accommodation since the cyclone hit. The Johnstone Shire Council has agreed to establish and maintain a register of need for the prioritisation of people requiring temporary accommodation with ongoing support from the Department of Housing.

The Department of Housing is relocating 53 multiroom transportable dwellings to the area, with some set aside for workers accommodation and the remainder available for community use. The Department of Housing is working directly with council to identify and source suitable sites and management arrangements. At this stage, 20 one-bedroom transportable units will be located in the council owned caravan park in Innisfail, and 20 one-bedroom transportable units will be located on vacant land owned by the Goondi Hill Hotel. Further, one self-contained transportable block of nine one-bedroom units will be located on vacant Department of Housing land in Charles Street, and four two-bedroom units will be located on Department of Housing land in Water Street. These units are currently being prepared for removal. It is expected that the first of these units will arrive in Innisfail next week. A further 60 transportable dwellings destined for the mines have also been placed on hold by the Department of Housing. We are working with the Johnstone Shire Council to find suitable sites as demand requires.

The Building Services Authority, which is also part of my portfolio, has played a lead role in establishing the Building Coordination Centre in Innisfail, which was officially opened by the Premier and General Cosgrove last week. The BCC is a joint initiative between the BSA, Queensland Master Builders Association, Housing Industry Association of Australia, Building Designers Association of Queensland, Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Insurance Disaster Response Organisation and Insurers and Engineers Australia. The BCC is being staffed by the BSA with industry associations and is a one-stop shop to help coordinate the rebuilding process. The BCC is also currently developing a web site database of contractors to undertake repair work. All contractors available to work in north Queensland are urged to register on the BCC database by phoning the BSA or registering online.

Finally, I am pleased to announce today that the Residential Tenancies Authority has created a new fact sheet with important rental tenancy law information specifically for victims of Cyclone Larry. One of the major issues it deals with is the rights and responsibilities of tenants and lessors when a rental property is damaged or is uninhabitable. This has been one of the most common queries to the RTA call centre, which has received close to 400 calls as a result of Cyclone Larry. The RTA information sheet for Cyclone Larry victims is available on the RTA web site and from local north Queensland branches of the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service in Cairns and Atherton or the Tenants Union in Cairns. I table a copy of that information sheet.