



Speech by

Hon. Rod Welford

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Monica; Death of Ms G Tybingoomba

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts) (10.11 am): This morning our thoughts are with the communities on Cape York Peninsula bracing for the impact of Cyclone Monica. The latest advice is that the category 3 cyclone with winds of up to 220 kilometres an hour will cross the coast north of Lockhart River around midday. As a safety precaution, two state schools on the peninsula have been closed today—Coen State School and Lockhart State School. Forty-five students from Coen State School and 103 students from Lockhart State School are affected. The principals and more than 30 staff have contacted all parents and are now following the local disaster management plan. All playground equipment has been secured, objects removed from windows and any debris removed. Our college campuses on the western cape at Mapoon, Weipa and Aurukun, where there are more than 1,000 students and 150 school staff, are also on alert.

This morning I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to an elder from the Aurukun community who passed away on Monday night after a long illness. Gladys Tybingoomba was an extraordinary woman, a role model for young Indigenous people and the first school manager of Aurukun State School. She was a powerful leader with immense cultural knowledge and was a strong advocate for Aboriginal issues, never being afraid to raise issues with the government of the day.

Ms Tybingoomba was an outstanding student at the then mission-run school at Aurukun. At the age of 16 in 1962 she was sent to Cairns TAFE and ultimately the University of Queensland. There she attained a diploma of general studies and later returned to her Cape York community as a teacher aide and subsequently became manager of the school. She was also one of the parties to the famous Wik claim, which saw the return of Aboriginal land to the Wik people as a result of a High Court decision. I want to pay tribute to Ms Tybingoomba today—an outstanding woman whose legacy will live on in the lives of the many children she influenced.

On a more positive note, there is good news from north Queensland. The final two classrooms at Innisfail State School are back online this morning as the clean-up effort continues after Cyclone Larry. There is still a lot of repair work to be done, but there are now sufficient classrooms operating in the region for all our state schools to offer full programs to all students.