



Speech by

Rosa Lee Long

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

Hansard Thursday, 11 May 2006

CYCLONE LARRY, RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (10.23 am): In the seven weeks since Cyclone Larry wreaked havoc, the power, phone and road corridors have mostly been fixed in my electorate but other concerns are beginning to appear. I wish to raise them so they can be addressed. The first is the number of ex-gratia payments of \$1,000 which are being refused. I understand that thousands of families are now receiving letters advising them that they are being refused for claims which are similar to others made earlier and already paid out.

Also, the small business grant of \$10,000 is becoming harder to access, with many applicants either being refused or asked to supply significantly more information to qualify than those who first received their grants. This is causing a great deal of angst to the thousands affected. They have genuinely suffered loss in this disaster and they have seen those around them receiving these same payments while in similar circumstances.

One example is that of a person who lost power for five days. He lost all his food in the fridge and freezer and had no hot water for a month. This person is a sole parent with a four-year-old child, yet the \$1,000 ex-gratia payment was refused because he did not fit neatly within the criteria. Another resident was without power for 15 days. The neighbours around him received the \$1,000 payment but he was refused. I believe there should be some consistency and compassion for these people who have just endured a natural disaster which was bigger than any other seen in the area for nearly a century.

As well, many people covered by insurance are becoming very frustrated because they cannot get the okay from insurers to make repairs, even when they can find a tradesman to do the job. One lady whose roof is still leaking through tarps has had a builder available for weeks but cannot get attention regarding insurance.

On a happier note, Tinaroo Falls Dam has been overflowing for some weeks now and it is a wonderful sight to see. The comparison with the dire situation here in the south-east is very stark. There is a blanket refusal to build new dams in the north, where massive quantities of water are simply running out to sea. Yet the lesson from the south-east is clear: if you do not build more dams in time, you wind up running out of water. We have to do better, both with the short-term issues like Cyclone Larry relief and with the long-term issues like building dams before we run dry.

Time expired.