



Speech by

Hon. Warren Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth) (10.50 am): It has been eight months since Cyclone Larry devastated communities in the far north. Over that time the Department of Communities has played a leading role in helping to restore the economic, social, physical and emotional wellbeing of the affected communities. I am pleased to report that very significant progress has been made. Last week's report from General Cosgrove on the number of homes and buildings repaired is proof of that.

The department has 36 dedicated recovery workers delivering support services through our one-stop shops in Babinda, Malanda and Innisfail, the 1800 recovery phone line and a specialist case management service which assists clients with repairs to homes. A further 21 support staff are also part of this recovery program. As of last week, these officers had handled more than 50,000 contacts with local people who were affected by the cyclone. To date, we have also distributed \$11.4 million in relief assistance payments to eligible applicants, covering emergency relief, essential home contents and repairs to dwellings. This is excellent progress and these efforts have made a big difference to people's lives.

North Queenslanders have shown plenty of spirit in what has been a very tough year, and now a sense of stability and optimism is being restored in these communities. A great example of this community spirit is the recent launch of a book produced by local Innisfail group, Mothers Helping Others. The book—*Cyclone Larry: tales of survival from the children of North Queensland*—is a collection of stories and artworks by local children who experienced the cyclone. It includes contributions from more than 300 children, from kindergarten age to secondary school students.

All proceeds from the sale of the book will go towards upgrading local playgrounds, so in effect these children are part of local efforts to rebuild their communities. I understand the books retail for around \$25 and can be purchased online through eBay. This example shows that these communities have come a long way since March, but there is more work to do, and Cyclone Larry recovery efforts will continue into 2007. I look forward to reporting on further progress in the new year.