



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Tuesday, 13 March 2007

CYCLONE LARRY, FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.49 pm): Tuesday, 27 March 2007 will mark the first anniversary of Tropical Cyclone Larry making landfall on the north Queensland coast. Homes were destroyed, commercial and public buildings and facilities were damaged, agricultural crops were decimated, and the natural environment was battered beyond recognition. In the days, weeks and months that followed, the resilience, determination and mateship of north Queenslanders came to the fore. Today I would like to acknowledge some of the people who served these communities in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry.

I will start with the local State Emergency Service volunteers and the virtual army of SES volunteers who flooded into the cyclone affected area in the wake of the cyclone. The local police, ambulance, and fire and rescue personnel were outstanding. Local council employees worked tirelessly to restore services in affected local government areas. A range of charitable organisations moved into the cyclone affected area swiftly to assist with the immediate needs of those who had been rendered homeless.

I would like to pay tribute to the Ergon Energy and Telstra workers who toiled fearlessly in the driving rain and in many instances worked in conditions that were downright dangerous given the number of fallen powerlines and the damage to communications infrastructure in the cyclone affected area. The fallen and unstable vegetation that these workers had to deal with to restore power and communication services to the area was extraordinary. It was a fine effort by these men and women.

The Australian Army arrived and set about methodically clearing the thousands of tonnes of debris from public spaces and private properties throughout the cyclone affected area. Our debt to them was acknowledged when the Freedom of the Shire of Johnstone was awarded to the 3rd Combat Service Support Battalion in October last year.

I also want to acknowledge the work of those people working in the Building Coordination Centre who have done their best to help streamline the reconstruction effort over the last 12 months. In my maiden speech in this House, I placed on record my gratitude to the Queensland government and the Commonwealth government for their generous support following Cyclone Larry. Party politics was put firmly to one side, and all members and ministers concerned, at both state and federal level, worked together to try to address the terrible misfortunes of the people of north Queensland affected by Cyclone Larry.

Lastly, I wish to express to General Peter Cosgrove the appreciation and affection of the people in north Queensland who were affected by Cyclone Larry. As the head of the Cyclone Larry Recovery Task Force, General Peter Cosgrove and his staff worked with the community to help in the rebuilding effort over the last 12 months. The general and his lieutenants showed tremendous leadership and empathy for people who, at the time, needed a leader who understood their plight.

To those communities in north Queensland that have endured and have rebuilt, I salute their tenacity, their steely resolve and their courage in the face of the significant challenges that confronted us in the wake of Cyclone Larry. You are fine Queenslanders.