



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Wednesday, 10 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal Distribution Committee

Hon. AM BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Premier) (9.43 am): I am pleased to advise the House that the Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal Distribution Committee has finalised the disbursement of the appeal fund. The committee chair, the Hon. Terry Mackenroth, has presented me with the committee's final report on disbursement. I table a copy of the committee's report and I would encourage people to have a look at it when it is distributed.

Tabled paper: Report by the Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal Distribution Committee dated August 2007.

The appeal fund reached \$23.044 million consisting of \$21.814 million in donations and \$1.23 million in accrued interest. The appeal demonstrated the great generosity of the Australian public and the business community when fellow Australians find themselves in difficulty. Contributions to the appeal fund came from all sectors of the community, including individuals—mums, dads and children were donating; large corporate donors; and a donation of \$1.1 million each from the Queensland and Australian governments.

The committee's report provides a very valuable reference document for future disaster recovery appeals, demonstrating a measured and responsible approach to disbursing the donations. Payments from the appeal fund were staged over four funding rounds targeting displaced persons, structural damage to owner occupied homes, community facilities of non-profit groups and individual continuing hardship. The funds were distributed equitably throughout the cyclone affected community with payments spread between insured and uninsured residents. The report also highlights the controlled distribution of the appeal fund, addressing the greatest need within the community while adopting sensible safeguards to protect the donated funds.

While the work of the distribution committee prioritised the rebuilding of homes, it also directed assistance to non-profit community facilities. These facilities are the backbone of every community and their repair is an important symbol of recovery. Of particular note, the Babinda RSL Memorial Hall and the Queensland Country Women's Association Hall in Millaa Millaa were destroyed and will both be completely rebuilt. A complete list of all assisted non-profit community facilities is provided in the report.

The costs associated with the administration of the appeal fund were met from the operating budget of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to ensure that all the donated funds were applied directly to their intended purpose of assisting cyclone victims. The report notes that the committee has allocated all the donated funds and the majority of the accrued interest. Any residual funds will be directed to benefit the victims of future disasters when the trust fund is wound up.

For their service to the community I wish to express my sincere thanks to all of the committee members: Terry Mackenroth, the chair of the committee, who did an extraordinary job and really applied himself with a great sense of dedication; the Minister for Main Roads and Local Government, Warren Pitt, who as a local was a very important part of the fund's activities; the Queensland chair of the Australian Red

Cross, Alan Clayton; former mayor of the Johnstone Shire Council, Neil Clarke; the area manager of Centrelink, Peter Searston; and the regional director of the Department of Housing, Brian Sheehan.

These committee members volunteered their services without any fee or any reward, acting in a spirit of goodwill that has been the cornerstone of the entire recovery effort from this terrible cyclone. I commend Terry Mackenroth and his colleagues for putting together such a comprehensive report. When people do respond financially to these sorts of crises they wonder what happened to the money. All of that is on the record and the public can have absolute confidence that the donations they made did actually go to people who were most in need. I encourage people to have a look at the report.