



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Tuesday, 6 February 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Western and Far-North Queensland Floods

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.38 am): As members are aware, over the past weeks our state has experienced widespread rain, particularly in western and far-north Queensland. That weather contrasts with the drought that we are experiencing in south-east Queensland. While the rain has been very welcome, it has also generated widespread floods, isolated many communities and resulted in a number of rescues. These floods serve as a timely reminder of the challenges faced by Queenslanders and once again highlight the resilience and commitment of our emergency services in fostering safer communities.

On the coast, the Bruce Highway was cut numerous times, isolating small towns including Giru, south of Townsville, which remained cut off for nearly 48 hours. EMQ is working closely with local communities and delivering support as needed. While we are handling the challenges of rescue and resupply, we are also ensuring communities remain prepared. This is particularly important now that Tropical Cyclone Nelson has formed in the Gulf of Carpentaria and another low east of Cairns has the potential to develop into a cyclone.

The low has been in the gulf for several days and planning and preparation is well advanced. The District Disaster Coordination Centre has been activated and the District Disaster Management Group met at 8 am today. Carpentaria and Mornington Island shires and the two local disaster management groups are also fully operational. The second low is currently situated around 175 kilometres east of Cairns. It is moving away from the coast at the moment at about four kilometres per hour and should gradually intensify over the next 24 hours.

I am sure many members are interested in the situation in Innisfail. I am advised that the area received heavy rains yesterday and overnight and, although the situation is currently easing, there is still the potential for further heavy rains. EMQ is keeping a close eye on the area. So far there have been some tarping and sandbagging operations, and we are ready to provide further assistance as required.

Those coastal communities between Cairns and Mackay that have already experienced heavy rain and flooding in recent days should also prepare for strong winds generated by these weather systems. Emergency Management Queensland is working closely with the Bureau of Meteorology and local and district disaster management groups. They already have staff deployed to these regional areas to assist with the flooding operations, and further staff are ready to be deployed as needed.