



Speech by

**Hon. Paul Lucas**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

Hansard Thursday, 15 March 2007

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### ***MV Wunma***

**Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (9.58 am): This government takes maritime safety very seriously. Last month, the 5,140 tonne barge *Wunma* was abandoned at sea after it took on water during Cyclone Nelson. The *Wunma*, which operates from the port of Karumba, transports zinc concentrates to anchored ships in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In early February, the *Wunma* had partially loaded a bulk carrier anchored in the gulf when the forecast for a tropical depression was issued. Because of poor weather conditions the *Wunma* was unable to finish loading and returned to port. The ship was in Karumba when the tropical depression forecast was upgraded to a tropical cyclone forecast. It then proceeded back to sea to ride out the cyclone.

While trying to outrun the storm, the ship began taking on rain and sea water. This eventually led to a loss of propulsion and power, so the ship anchored and was made relatively secure. However, water continued to enter the vessel. The ship was abandoned with all crew rescued by helicopter and returned safely to Karumba.

This is one of those incidents that could easily have ended in tragedy, and I think it is beholden on all parties concerned to consider the circumstances leading up to and during this incident to identify ways to reduce the risks of similar incidents in the future. For this reason, I intend to exercise my powers under the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 to convene a board of inquiry into this incident. This will involve the appointment of independent experts whose job will be to consider the circumstances and probable causes of the marine incident and prepare a report and recommendations for my consideration and tabling in parliament.

Boards of inquiry are not about playing a blame game; they are not established with a purpose of pointing fingers at individuals. The primary role of the board will be to look at all of the facts leading up to, during and after the marine incident, and make recommendations that will hopefully have safety benefits for the whole of the marine industry operating in far-north Queensland and the gulf.