



Speech by


Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 10 March 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Colour for a Cure; Yarrabah

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.23 am): Before I begin my ministerial statement I ask for the indulgence of the House to appreciate the fact that I have yellow hair today.

An honourable member: It's green!

Mr PITT: Everyone is colourblind. I want to make sure that people are aware that there are a number of people across Queensland who are suffering through the tragedies of lymphomas, leukaemia and related blood disorders. There are some 30,000 Australians living with those diseases, so this is for a great cause.

Today I rise to speak about the stoicism and strength of the Aboriginal community of Yarrabah in the heart of my electorate of Mulgrave. I pay tribute to this community and to its collective courage. The march of time and three big cyclones—Winifred, Larry and Yasi—have changed the local landscape. But one thing that will never change is the way that the people of Yarrabah pull together when tragedy strikes one of their own. A few weeks ago the community was bracing itself for the worst that nature could throw at them. Several beachside streets were evacuated. Friends and relatives went to higher ground and others who were on higher ground opened their hearts and their homes to people in low-lying areas. While some families bunkered down at the Yarrabah PCYC, others sought refuge in Cairns. They woke with relief the next morning knowing that the full brunt of the cyclone had passed them by.

While the town's infrastructure was not badly damaged, the same cannot be said for a number of homes in the community. If there is one thing that stands out above all else it is that when tragedy strikes people will move heaven and earth to help, and they were not alone. Staff from the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council and my department—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services in Far North Queensland—also swung into action. The teams worked together to determine the extent of the damage and to assess what was needed to get the community back on its feet. Around 50 households needed help from the community recovery effort. A week after the cyclone, the teams arranged for community recovery centre outreach staff to provide emergency payments and help to those families in need. I commend them for seizing the day and I commend them for stepping in to help their neighbours. Mayor Percy Neal and others also lent a hand to help with the clean-up at Jumbun.

As we know, further to the south it will be a long road to recovery for communities on the Cassowary Coast, and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority will play a pivotal role. I have every confidence that it will spearhead the drive to recovery and cut through red tape to rebuild the Cassowary Coast more quickly. When we bounce back, our future will be bigger and brighter than ever.