



Speech by


Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 9 March 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Natural Disasters, Recovery Assistance

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining) (9.59 am): Many residents of Far North Queensland have had their lives torn apart by Cyclone Yasi. The state government wants to provide whatever assistance it can to help them rebuild. That is why residents in some of the hardest hit areas like Tully, Cardwell and Mission Beach are being given access to free TAFE courses. The practical training is being offered at the Innisfail and Tully campuses of the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE.

The free construction and building courses include courses in bobcat, front-end loader, backhoe and crane operation, truck licences, chainsaw operation, construction white cards, traffic control and food hygiene. So far, 149 people have taken advantage of the scheme in Tully, undertaking traffic control, white card and chainsaw courses. Another 48 people are registered in courses that would normally cost between \$50 for a chainsaw ticket and \$800 for bobcat or backhoe licences. This means local workers can take part in the local recovery effort and gain important employment skills, experience and qualifications. We have recognised the immediate need to run these practical courses to enable these residents to physically rebuild their lives and to rebuild safely. That is why the free training courses are running over half and full days.

The free TAFE courses offered in Far North Queensland are in addition to other great work being carried out to help Queensland recover. At the same time as offering assistance to communities, we are getting on with the very important business of making sure skilled workers are available to take advantage of employment opportunities being created across Queensland.

At the weekend, the state government announced a joint \$83 million jobs and skills package with the Commonwealth government to help disaster affected communities. The package includes help to provide more than 1,500 placements through the Green Army; support 2,500 apprentices or trainees to continue their training; provide training to ensure there are enough people ready to enter apprenticeships and traineeships once the economy picks up; and 30 jobs skill development officers across the state to work closely with local governments, organisations and businesses to coordinate skills training and provide job opportunities for Queenslanders in the recovery areas. The measures the Bligh government is putting in place to help Queenslanders now will help create jobs and skilled workers well into the future.