




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2024

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Wujal Wujal, Cyclone Recovery

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Treaty, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Communities and Minister for the Arts) (10.14 am): On 13 December 2023 as category 2 Tropical Cyclone Jasper passed over Wujal Wujal without too much fanfare, no-one could have predicted the extraordinary flooding event that would follow, causing large-scale isolation and destruction across the region. For the people of Wujal Wujal, when flooding took out the sewerage and water systems, electricity, road networks and basic health, education and community safety services, evacuation was the only safe option. Consequently, on 19 December, as most Queenslanders were preparing for Christmas festivities, the entire Wujal Wujal community was evacuated via helicopter.

For more than 120 days, residents have been temporarily relocated in Cairns, Cooktown and surrounding areas while the reconstruction work was underway. To say that this extended disconnection from country has been incredibly difficult for this community is an understatement. Following the substantial impacts to the community, the Miles government acted quickly to undertake targeted work with agencies across government to return Wujal Wujal residents home as quickly as possible. I am pleased to inform the House today that the first residents have returned home to Wujal Wujal this week, with the aim to have all families home before the end of May.

Queensland's Big Build agencies have worked closely with council, elders and residents to develop and implement community-led plans for the return to community. There has been a phenomenal effort across government to make this possible—with representatives from my Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, QBuild, housing, health, water, education, Transport and Main Roads, and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority working together tirelessly to rebuild the Wujal Wujal community back even better than before. I want to acknowledge ministers Scanlon, Fentiman, Butcher, Boyd, Farmer and Mellish for their incredible leadership in their departments. I also thank the member for Cook for her great advocacy and her great passion for the community.

We have also partnered with key agencies—including Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, Cape York Partnership, Gungarde Community Centre Aboriginal Corporation and the Cooktown District Community Centre—to work with affected families to identify needs and provide ongoing case management and psychosocial supports. All 91 homes in Wujal Wujal that sustained varying degrees of damage from ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper will be repaired by the end of this week, which is an incredible outcome.

The community store, which is opening later this month, has been rebuilt by QBuild even better than before, with a new coolroom, disability friendly amenities and a brand new fit-out. Community Enterprise Queensland is in the process of fitting out the new store and training local employees to

ensure trading can resume as soon as possible. A brand new temporary health facility has been built and fitted out to clinical specifications ready to meet the needs of the community. In partnership with GIVIT and Jabalbina, each household will also have all their flood damaged whitegoods and household and essential items replaced ready for their return.

This has been a significant collaborative effort across government and with our non-government organisations and partners to help get Wujal Wujal back on its feet. I know all in this House and all Queenslanders will join with me in wishing the people of Wujal Wujal all the very best as they begin their return to home.