




Speech By
Hon. Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2024

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Weather Events

 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (2.36 pm): On 13 December Far North Queensland received our first cyclone for the season, as we have heard other speakers refer to. In fact, it was the first major cyclone since Yasi back in 2011. Tropical Cyclone Jasper crossed the coast as a category 2 system on Wednesday evening in the vicinity of the township of Wujal Wujal, as we all know.

The cyclone itself was different from previous cyclones experienced due to the movement and the unexpected stalling of this system. Once in Australia's area of responsibility, this tropical cyclone sat off the coast for eight days prior to crossing the Far North Queensland coast. The benefit of hindsight now tells us that sitting over the Coral Sea all that time meant the system was absorbing copious amounts of moisture.

The weekend of 16 and 17 December saw Far North Queensland hit by constant torrential rain from this ex-tropical cyclone which subsequently caused significant and major flooding and a huge amount of damage in a wide range of areas. The figures are staggering, with the Bureau of Meteorology showing that over two metres of rain fell in a four-day period around Mossman Gorge and 1.9 metres near Kuranda Range over the same period. Some of the rainfalls have been the heaviest recorded anywhere in Australia since 1958. In 40 hours the airport received approximately 600 millimetres of rain.

It is at times like this that the community really has to pull together. As I was up there, I want to commend the emergency crews who are to be applauded for their commitment to successfully completing over 300 rescues in the first 42 hours. Most of these rescues were done in the evenings, late at night, in torrential rain and in arduous conditions. I want to make mention of all of those crews. Not all were from the tropical north; a lot had come from the south-east, and they did an absolutely fantastic job.

The Far North road network was decimated. You only had to look at the Rex Range to see that. The roads into Mossman, Port Douglas and Julatten had all been absolutely destroyed. I want to recognise the work of the department of main roads. They have done a fantastic job and they worked 24/7 to open it up to ensure we got access to those areas. These things are absolutely essential. We needed to get those roads opened.

As we have also heard, Ergon Energy did an incredible job. They had over 500 field crew on the ground, some of whom had cancelled their annual leave and were relocated from the south-east, as we have heard. Because we own these assets, those crews can be redeployed. We are not seeing these things happen in other parts of the Commonwealth. We need to maintain these fantastic assets. I want to acknowledge the work they have all done to help make things a little better for those who have suffered in the north.