




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Weather Events, Health System

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (10.04 am): The health and wellbeing of Queenslanders is a priority for the Crisafulli government. While extreme weather events are not unprecedented in Queensland, the scale and impact of Tropical Cyclone Alfred has been deeply felt by many. Across our health system, through planning, preparation and perseverance, patient care continued to be delivered to Queenslanders—a remarkable achievement. With few exceptions, Queensland Health facilities remained open and available. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude—and I am sure the gratitude of members in this place and Queenslanders—to our healthcare workers and paramedics whose dedication has seen us through these trying times.

I have heard some amazing stories of exceptional patient care across the board—care from paramedics, nurses and doctors—and consideration by our hospital administrators. Beyond the front line, countless others played critical roles in our emergency response. Dedicated hospital staff, administrators and volunteers have worked to ensure medical facilities remained operational. Last Friday, over 2,000 staff stayed at our hospitals in preparation for the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Over the course of the last few days, I have taken the opportunity to meet many of them and thank them in person. On Saturday and Sunday I visited the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, where I met many of those workers. I met Pat at the hospital's main entrance, who loved staying overnight and was pulling another 12-hour shift the next day to ensure patients who were attending had someone friendly to talk to. I met Andrea, in the haematology and bone marrow transplant unit, who was part of a combined effort to get an emergency transfer of stem cells from Sydney to Brisbane. If they had not arrived by Sunday, that patient would not have been saved. This was a coordinated effort between a volunteer donor group that arranged for the flight into Sydney, the QAS who met a driver at Armidale in New South Wales and our clinicians at the RBWH to get those life-changing stem cells to a transplant patient. The procedure went ahead on Saturday afternoon, saving the patient's life.

When Toowoomba access was cut off due to flash flooding, the Queensland Health team arranged a CareFlight helicopter to ferry urgent blood supplies from the Royal to the Toowoomba Hospital and the St Vincent's Private Hospital. Supplies of blood products were dangerously low and that mercy flight meant 120 patients could be treated with life-saving blood products from Red Cross Lifeblood. If you can, get out and donate.

At the QEII Hospital yesterday, I met Dr Sanjeev Naidu, who stayed overnight but also took up the role of full-time barista, supplying coffee to the 144 staff who stayed onsite last Friday.

We also cannot forget the effort in North Queensland and the ongoing recovery there. During my time in North Queensland two weeks ago, I was delighted to meet with staff and patients at the Ingham Health Service. Led by Medical Superintendent Dr Selina Porter and Director of Nursing Janine

Johnson, many of the staff at the Ingham Health Service bunkered down at the hospital during the floods, and the days that followed, sleeping on the floors, underneath desks and in day rooms in between shifts. They even delivered two babies on the Saturday morning. In a 20-bed hospital we had more than 40 people and a dog staying overnight, charging their phones.

The Queensland Health staff went above and beyond. I am sure, on behalf of everyone, I can say: thank you for your efforts; you make our community stronger.