

Question on Notice No. 184, Tuesday, 27 April 2004

Mr O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins) -

Will he provide advice on how last month's activation of disaster relief measures following Tropical Cyclone Grace will benefit the effected communities?

Mr CUMMINS:

In mid March 2004, Tropical Cyclone Grace caused flooding and landslips across Far North Queensland communities. This damage compounded that from Tropical Cyclone Fritz in February 2004 and flooding across the Gulf of Carpentaria and Western Queensland since January 2004.

Once the extent of damage from Tropical Cyclone Grace was confirmed, and on the basis that it would be difficult to differentiate, in some cases, the damage from previous weather events, I approved the extension of the area defined for receipt of natural disaster relief arrangements to include Tropical Cyclone Grace. In this way, all damage across Far North Queensland from the three severe weather events became a combined disaster event for disaster relief arrangements.

This action resulted in significant savings for Local Governments in terms of potential for multiple contributions and also reduced administrative complexity for Local Governments in attempting to distinguish damage from each separate event.

Disaster relief measures activated for the combined event cover:

- assistance for needy individuals;
- counter disaster operations performed by State and Local Governments;
- restoration of roads and other assets including that owned by Local Governments; and
- Concessional Loans for Primary Producers.

Assistance to individuals provided through the Department of Communities has covered emergent assistance needs, essential household contents and the restoration of dwellings to a habitable and secure condition.