

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 545
Asked on Thursday, 20 April 2006

MR WALLACE asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

Will he advise of the activities of the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority in the State's north in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry?

ANSWER:

QRAA has implemented a number of strategies to streamline the process for primary producers and small businesses when making applications for assistance under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) package, including refinement of the assessment process and development of a "Cyclone Larry" specific application form, which is considerably simpler than the standard NDRA application form.

From 3 April 2006, QRAA had five staff stationed in the declaration area, based at: South Johnstone, Innisfail, Babinda, Malanda and Tully. In response to demand, this has been reduced to four officers, based at South Johnstone, Innisfail, Malanda and Tully, with any requests for information from Babinda being serviced by Innisfail.

It is proposed, at this stage, to retain this level of resources through until the end of May 2006. A review of the situation will then be undertaken to determine ongoing needs for staffing in the region.

Advertisements have been placed to engage additional assessing staff for the Brisbane office, to cope with the anticipated influx of applications.

Information kits were prepared, which contained application forms and guidelines for both primary producers and small businesses. Approximately 1 000 kits have been forwarded from QRAA Brisbane directly to primary producers and small businesses. The kits were also distributed throughout the banking networks, "one-stop" shops and at various meetings.

Some 22 meetings were held with industry groups, ie banana, avocado, tropical fruits and canegrowers, together with other Government stakeholders who are dealing with primary producers and small businesses, including officers from the Departments of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Communities and State Development, Trade and Innovation. Approximately 1 200 participants attended these meetings and information kits were provided to prospective applicants.

As at 28 April 2006, 30 applications for assistance had been received – 23 from primary producers and seven from small businesses. Three primary producer applications have been approved for \$305,000 and one small business application approved for \$20,000. One small business application has been declined as the application did not meet the NDRA guidelines. The other applications are being assessed and/or awaiting further information.

Advertisements have been and will continue to be placed in local newspapers to promote the assistance available and the location of the QRAA staff in the region.

QRAA's website (www.qraa.qld.gov.au) provides up to date information including formal guidelines, application forms, guides to completing application forms, information sheets and answers to frequently asked questions and details of QRAA's support team in the region.