

Question on Notice

No. 1

Asked on 13 February 2013

MR HOBBS asked the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (MS DAVIS)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise following ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald NDRRA disaster declarations in the Warrego Electorate, how the department has responded to those affected in the Western Downs Regional Council area with community recovery efforts?

ANSWER

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services is working in collaboration with a range of partners, including Lifeline, the Australian Red Cross and the local council to provide recovery support and services to residents affected by ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald in the Western Downs Regional Council area.

Financial assistance, information and referral services are provided through my department, with loans for small businesses and primary producers administered through QRAA.

Under the Australian Government's Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, the Personal Hardship Assistance Scheme (Category A) has three main assistance grants—Emergent Assistance Grant, Essential Household and Contents Grant and the Structural Assistance Grant.

As at 19 February 2013, 155 applications for Emergent Assistance Grants have been received with 116 of these approved for a total amount of \$32,940. There have been two applications for Essential Household and Contents Grants and one application for a Structural Assistance Grant. These grant applications are currently being assessed.

Lifeline has been engaged to provide counselling services and Red Cross has been engaged to provide personal and practical support to Western Downs residents seeking information and support for flood recovery. These arrangements commenced on 29 January 2013 and were initially for one month, however, have been extended until mid-March 2013 at this time.

In the Chinchilla area, over 30 businesses and 15 houses were inundated to some degree. An Evacuation Centre was established on 29 January 2013 as many residents in the community were stranded. This Centre closed on 1 February 2013 and outreach services commenced. The department is working closely with the Chinchilla Family Support Centre to ensure outreach services continue to be provided to those identified as being impacted by the flood event.

Outreach services are also being provided to the communities of Dalby, Tara and Condamine.

In Miles, it was reported up to 160 trucks and 60 vehicles were stranded in the community. A safe refuge for these stranded motorists was established. Beds and basic tea and coffee facilities were provided as well as food vouchers to access food at the local store. While no officers from the department were deployed to Miles, regular contact continues to be made to the local service providers to monitor the need for support.

The department will continue to closely monitor residents' needs for assistance as we extend into the medium and longer-term recovery, with a focus on building resilience.

By doing this, we aim to provide immediate assistance as well as restore the emotional, social and physical wellbeing of Queenslanders affected by this disaster well into the future.