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# The Final Report of the Operation Recovery Task Force



Severe Tropical  
Cyclone *Larry*

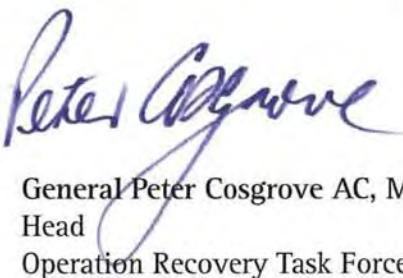
Version 2

This Report has been written in a way which, it is hoped, will be helpful to people with responsibility for organising recovery from some other natural disaster. It is an unpleasant fact in Australia that such events will occur from time to time.

The first part of the document provides an overview of how the recovery was organised and what was done. The intention is that people under pressure can digest it quite quickly.

The attachments contain detailed reports from individual agencies of government who assisted in Operation Recovery. They contain their own analysis and views of the recovery process in each specialised area, and as such could provide ready information to counterpart organisations facing a similar situation.

The attachments also contain examples of key working documents, with a view to saving others from perhaps having to reinvent the wheel.



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Head  
Operation Recovery Task Force

April 2007

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Cyclone damage to Mourilyn Mill.

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- Attachment 31 Guiding Principles for the Operation Recovery Task Force
- Attachment 32 Operation Recovery Task Force Strategic Road Map
- Attachment 33 Operation Recovery Governance Framework
- Attachment 34 Operation Recovery Task Force Strategic Milestones
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### Examples of useful working documents

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- Attachment 38 Sample Community Consultative Meeting Agenda
- Attachment 39 Sample of Operation Recovery Management Group Monthly Report

# Introduction

## Background

On the morning of Monday, 20 March 2006 one of the most devastating natural events to strike Queensland in living memory, severe tropical cyclone *Larry* crossed the coastline of Far North Queensland. This event caused widespread damage to an area estimated at over 17,000 square kilometres, an area about one quarter the size of Tasmania. The Bureau of Meteorology had accurately predicted its path and gathering power over the several days of its build-up. This enabled a great deal of preparation and public notification to take place and this factor was crucial in minimising what was nonetheless colossal damage and, of course, in the extraordinarily low toll of injury, and no deaths, attributable to the cyclone.

In its broad path as it came ashore, the cyclone threatened a population of well over 30,000 in a strip from Babinda, south of Cairns through the town of Innisfail and satellite settlements and rural properties, to Tully in the south, and striking far inland through the Atherton Tablelands. The cyclone was initially adjudged a Category 5 system with estimated wind speeds of up to 290 kilometres per hour. While more powerful than its most damaging predecessor, *Tracey*, which hit Darwin on Christmas day 1974, it moved more quickly along its path and this was a small mercy.

If *Larry* had come ashore about 80km further north, through Cairns and/or had this occurred a few hours earlier or later (i.e. on top of a high tide), then the injury toll and the damage to infrastructure and industry may have been dramatically higher. As it was, the damage and destruction was devastating enough. While initial media reports obviously focussed on the impact on people's lives and thus their homes and personal possessions, industry, especially primary industry, had been devastated. Subsequent estimates give the economic damage (foregone income) as upwards of half a billion dollars.

The cyclone-struck region was immediately plunged into a state of emergency and one of the most intensive relief operations in Queensland's history swung into action. Men and women from all over the State and from many other parts of Australia rallied to help the people affected in a relief and then a recovery effort which has continued for many months.

The initial relief efforts, consistent with the preparations for the cyclone's arrival ashore, were wholly admirable. Well trained and hugely energetic police and emergency services workers, including fire, ambulance and State Emergency Service (SES) very quickly commenced the work of relieving the physical and psychological consequences of the event. The professional workforce was supplemented by a tremendous volunteer commitment. Queensland and Australian Government public servants, experts in service needs and delivery, assessed and provided for both individual and community-wide problems arising from *Larry*. Volunteers, both individuals from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and community groups of all sorts, turned out and turned up in their many hundreds, ministering to the needs of their fellow Australians in distress. At every hand, it was uplifting to see so many people doing needful things with such cheerful selflessness.

This was the relief operation which lasted several weeks and as might be expected overlapped significantly with the recovery operation, the further subject of this Report. Many of the attached departmental and agency reports cover significant components of the relief operation in addition to later recovery programs and activities.



Within the land area impacted by the cyclone there were nine Shire/Council areas where damaging effects occurred (Johnstone, Cardwell, Eacham, Atherton, Herberton, Mareeba, Cairns, Etheridge and Croydon) with Johnstone Shire being hardest hit.

Even one year on it is difficult to give a firm and final figure on the number of structures damaged by wind and water – it numbers many thousands from substantial homes and commercial buildings, to many relatively flimsy structures which almost exploded with the force of the wind.

We know that of insured buildings there were almost 19,000 building claims lodged with insurers. This includes homes, commercial buildings, outdoor sheds and the like. When we include claims, for contents destroyed and damaged, over 27,000 domestic insurance claims have been recorded to date, with an estimated total exceeding \$369 million.

In addition, there were many public-owned properties damaged during the event. For example, the Department of Housing sustained damage to 1,146 of their properties and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts sustained damage to 91 schools. The Department of Public Works, through its maintenance and construction arm QBuild, coordinated the repairs to public-owned properties. A comprehensive overview of their activities is contained as Attachment 14.

While this damage to property provides the starker demonstration of the impact of the disaster and the scale of the recovery task, the impact was also strongly felt upon the economy of the region and the lives of its people. This overview report summarises the main recovery efforts that were made across all of these areas.

# The early days – first phase of the recovery

## Appointment of the Operation Recovery Task Force

While the quantum of damage was not readily measurable in those first few days post-cyclone, it was obvious that there would need to be a major, focussed, comprehensive and multilateral recovery project to assist the affected community back on to its feet. In this respect, it was not surprising that the Premier appointed a Task Force to provide oversight and help deliver the recovery program to the Far North.

This Task Force was effectively constituted within the first 12 hours of the cyclone, when the Premier appointed General Peter Cosgrove AC, MC (Retd) to head a Recovery Task Force as Chairman. The other members of the Task Force were also quickly appointed, these members being:

- Mr Ross Rolfe – Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and then Coordinator-General,
- Mr Sandy Hollway AO – who had led the Canberra bushfire recovery effort and former Chief Executive Officer of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, and
- The Honourable Terry Mackenroth – former Queensland Government Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Chair of the Tropical Cyclone *Larry* Relief Appeal Fund Distribution Committee.

A short time later, Mr John Mulcahy, Deputy Chair of the insurance pinnacle body, the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA), was appointed to the Task Force as the insurance industry representative.

The Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services attended meetings from time to time as necessary. Directors-General of the relevant Queensland Government agencies attended all meetings.

This Task Force structure provided in short order a very senior and tight knit leadership group to drive the recovery, through the efforts of the public service and other specialists. There was public service coordination both in the region through the Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) and in Brisbane through the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG), chaired by the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Importantly, the Australian Government participated in both groups. The Task Force notes with deep appreciation the large number of Departments and agencies of the Queensland and Australian Governments who contributed so much to the recovery and whose activities are documented in the attachments to this report.

Simply, the vast bulk of recovery work was done by ordinary Queenslanders, with the great assistance of State and Commonwealth officials and volunteers. The Task Force was a useful and active proponent of alternatives and lines of progression, but as might be assumed, the work as always was done by men and women in the great professional arm of executive government. However, due to the extent of devastation it quickly became apparent that a special team would be required to coordinate and manage a recovery operation of such size and complexity to work on a daily basis in the disaster area and to report back on the evolving situation and to recommend a full range of recovery measures. It was also important to provide a publicly visible focal point for recovery as a means of creating community confidence. Hence, the creation of the Operation Recovery Task Force

(ORTF), with a forward element based on the ground in the affected region and other members on call frequently to assist in planning and monitoring recovery programs.

The Task Force met 19 times, most frequently in Brisbane to facilitate contact with Queensland Government agencies, but also a number of times in the cyclone-affected region. The Chairman of the Task Force was fundamentally resident in the region for over four months and was supported by a small staff who focussed on following up decisions, maintaining linkages with the community and stakeholders, providing "eyes and ears", and media and public communications.

Attachment 31 provides the Guiding Principles, which governed the establishment and operation of the Task Force. Three subordinate strategic level documents, prepared at the outset, complemented these principles. They were:

- a Strategic Road Map (Attachment 32) that defined the methodology to achieve the Task Force goals;
- a Governance Framework (Attachment 33) that outlined the interaction between the organisations involved; and
- a list of significant events which would contribute to the achievement of Strategic Milestones (Attachment 34) on the way to recovery.

These documents were not set in stone, but deliberately reviewed from time to time and where necessary adjusted. For example, the life of the Task Force itself was extended beyond the period initially envisaged, so that it would continue in place through the testing times of the next (2006/2007) wet season.

### **Strategic approach**

Over and above the Guiding Principles listed in Attachment 31, there were some important points of strategic approach, which developed as the Task Force started to tackle its work:

- Relief of a welfare nature, already underway, must continue without impediment and must develop logically through further phases as necessary; no other recovery activity should impede that fundamental service.
- Noting the lack of basic human subsistence needs and the collapse of the drivers of the regional economy, the Task Force would need to address as a very high priority, the relief of pressures which might lead to 'population flight'.
- This made housing and employment support a high priority.
- If economic recovery was to be speedy, then early targeted support measures would be needed for industry sectors affected by the cyclone.
- The Task Force acknowledged that the watershed nature of the cyclone in some cases provided both an opportunity and a motivation for industry sector reform but that this was outside the remit of the Task Force, which was created to help restore social and economic viability to the affected area.
- The Task Force would always work on the basis of comprehensive engagement with stakeholders, consultation, transparency and negotiation. The Task Force would work in partnership in preference to any other relationship with policy and executive agencies.
- The Task Force would embrace an ongoing system of performance review to continually check its relevance and effectiveness in contributing to recovery.
- The Task Force would work on minimal organisational and manpower overheads, in keeping with its coordinating rather than executive role.

Absolutely vital to success was the interested and active support of the Premier of Queensland along with the existence of a collaborative, non-partisan relationship between the Australian and Queensland Governments, with the Prime Minister and the Premier setting the tone.

### Planning

For planning purposes, the recovery was divided into its key components – human services, rebuilding, economic, environment and communications. It was acknowledged at the outset that these components were strongly linked and interdependent. In this regard it was a major job of the Task Force to establish and cater for these linkages. The objective was to execute a coherent, efficient and effective Recovery strategy by coordinating consultation with stakeholders and providing agencies.

Milestones and appropriate Key Performance Indicators were put in place, monitored, and updated. A task-related ad hoc organisation (see the Task Force organisation chart at Attachment 33) was established under the Task Force umbrella, firstly, to generate and coordinate broader issues and, secondly, to provide specialized support and advice to affected communities.



An example of the former was in the area of industry recovery. An Operation Recovery Industry Action Group (ORIAG) was established comprising state government department and industry representatives, to consider the cyclone-related issues with industry sectors and to propose recovery measures to the Queensland and Australian Governments. A comprehensive overview of this Group is provided as Attachment 25.

In the latter 'specialised' area, the Task Force sponsored the creation of a Building Coordination Centre (BCC), based on the Queensland Building Services Authority (QBSA), a statutory body. This Centre, described in greater detail below and in Attachment 24, was a 'One-Stop Shop' for anyone looking for information or advice in relation to building repair.

Another specialized facility available to affected communities was the ORMG, which carried over from the intensive relief operations when it was, with a somewhat different agency membership, known as the State Disaster Coordination Centre (Forward). It supervised and supported a series of shop-fronts for government welfare services around the *Larry* area.

# Ongoing Recovery Activities

## Community support, health and well-being

The fundamental challenge created by *Larry* was not the damage to bricks and mortar, nor to the mainsprings of the regional economy, significant though this damage was. Rather it was the damage to people's well-being both physical and mental, people who had seen their homes and livelihoods laid low, their hard work of previous years jeopardised, their futures uncertain but bleak in prospect.

Even the tough and hardy people of the Far North could be excused for a sense of despair. The Task Force and government agencies were aware of the psychological pattern which can follow a major disaster, whereby resignation or depression can set in once the initial crisis has passed and as the months of living in the aftermath of the disasters wear on. An effort was made to monitor this situation, both in terms of the general community mood, and alertness to individuals who might find it particularly hard to recover. In such circumstances, as in all post-disaster activities, sensitive, speedy and effective community support had to be a top priority.

A first order of business was to provide small cash grants to people of means or otherwise, unable to access funds because of the loss of electrical power and the incapacity this caused to financial institutions. This part of the relief operation and the delivery of the more expected and conventional social welfare services are more fully described in Attachments 2 and 23 to this Report (and for convenience Attachment 30 provides a list of all key assistance measures).

Health, housing and hunger were logical early preoccupations in the relief activities. Access to clean water and adequate food were major pillars of the unstinting efforts of the SES and the contingent of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, the latter from Townsville and Cairns. Together with an initial clean-up of debris sufficient to allow route and home access and to remove imminent danger, this serving of the basic needs of people characterised their tireless efforts.

In its way, the urgent and immediate campaign embarked upon by Ergon, Energex and Powerlink to restore electrical power to the disaster area, although technical and mechanical in its work, was of the same humanitarian quality as those other more obviously humanitarian activities. It is interesting to note that the Queensland Government only terminated the declaration of disaster on 3 April 2006 coincident with the restoration of gridded or large generator power throughout all but a few pockets of the disaster area – such these days is the way in which the availability of electricity is viewed as a staple of reasonable living. Ergon and Powerlink are widely regarded as having performed magnificently in restoring power as quickly and comprehensively as was done after *Larry*. Attachment 10 provides a comprehensive summary of activities in this utility arena.

Beyond the State and Commonwealth organised disaster relief forces, which swung into action after the cyclone on 20 March 2006, many NGOs, both national and local, poured aid, expertise and groups of energetic and willing workers into the relief effort. So prolific was this response that there seems to the Task Force great benefit in contemplating a state government system of fostering, registering and harmonising the work of these great men and women, as a matter of contingency planning and consultation before the event of any future natural disaster. The practical assistance, the skills, the energy and the boost to morale that these NGOs bring is crucial but there can be great efficiency and effectiveness gains made if they agree to some level of coordination within the disaster area. This matter will be subject of a recommendation later in this Report.



All banana crops were flattened.

Early in the relief operation, the key decision was taken to establish multi-agency shop-front activities through the disaster area, to bring human services to the people who had so much more to do than travel long distances and queue up at a succession of agency office premises. These One Stop Shops, which numbered 13 initially, but were consolidated to two centres later on in the recovery process, were established in a dispersed and targeted way to engage the maximum number of the affected population by providing a unified point of contact and support to people requiring assistance.

In this way many government departments and agencies at this crucial level of interface with a large number of Australians with complex and urgent needs were able to apply powerful, quick and effective assistance with minimal 'red tape'. Significant financial assistance was provided to people in need and a quick and sympathetic assessment could be more readily made of their immediate needs – for example in terms of health, food, clean water, shelter and money.

The One Stop Shops were a very useful two-way conduit of both practical help and information and advice. The Task Force considered them a great means of maintaining a 'health check' on the affected population, its progress in rehabilitation and any emerging issues for attention.

The One Stop Shop concept was, in short, very appropriate as a means of leveraging great agency expertise to provide for powerful and effective multi-faceted support in post disaster circumstances – it was a place where a range of experts and officials with delegated authority could deal on the spot with a range of problems. It will be the subject of a recommendation later in this Report.

In the delivery of human services, two other points were especially noteworthy.

First, whereas the emphasis in the early period was on the delivery of services on a large scale across the community, later in the recovery process the emphasis shifted towards individual case management. This was an effort to provide a holistic solution to the problems facing a particular individual. People with vulnerabilities which existed before the cyclone sometimes found these to be exacerbated and were in need of particular support.

Second, in an area as extensive as the area affected by *Larry*, with a widely dispersed population, it was vital to have outreach of human services beyond Innisfail and other points of population concentration. As the recovery went on, more attention and resources were devoted to this.

### **Tropical Cyclone *Larry* Relief Appeal and offers of assistance**

Under the banner of community support, it is very important to acknowledge the huge wave of support by ordinary Australians, a great number of NGOs and by corporate Australia.

On the day of the cyclone itself, the Queensland Government set up the Tropical Cyclone *Larry* Relief Appeal Fund. As noted earlier, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth agreed to administer the Fund. At the date of this Report, the Fund had attracted over \$22 million and allocated over \$18 million for a wide variety of individual and community needs, from housing to sports clubs and other projects to restore and uplift community life more generally in the cyclone area.

Although, in broad terms, the success of Operation Recovery has obviated the further need for a dedicated and ad hoc Task Force to assist recovery progress and momentum, the Fund will continue in operation until all of its objectives have been reasonably met. Mr Mackenroth will, over time, continue to furnish progress reports and necessary recommendations to the State Government. Mr Mackenroth has established a comprehensive consultation and assessment process incorporating respected community leaders to ensure that compassion and wisdom match the necessary rigour and objectivity in decisions concerning disbursement.

The generosity of the community in Queensland and Australia was also shown by numerous offers of in-kind support ranging from building materials and services to clothing and food. This became a problem of stewardship and proper disbursement. Although invariably the offers were well intended, they did not always fit the needs of the moment. Also, offers can be problematic when not combined with an effective means of transport and delivery. Nevertheless, the offers were appreciated in the spirit in which they were made.

The Task Force was concerned to put this in-kind support to the best possible use for the people affected by the cyclone. This necessitated a major audit of all offers, several months into the recovery, and a major effort to consult the various individuals and organisations providing support to maximise the use of the in-kind contributions.

It would be useful for people in charge of recovery efforts following natural disasters to provide information to media outlets about what is and is not needed at a very early stage. This will help to ensure that the assistance, which is provided by the public, really fits with what the impacted community requires; and indeed those efforts by the media itself to generate support, which can be very powerful, hit the mark.

### **Housing and construction**

There were close to 19,000 houses needing repair and a large number of other structures such as sheds, garages and carports. Of these homes, a majority were covered to some degree by insurance and the remainder were either public housing or homes uninsured by the owner. A large number of business premises also required some level of repair. The overall insurance claims bill totals over \$369 million, involving almost 25 insurers. This was the greatest single event set of claims on Australian insurers since the hailstorms in Sydney in 1998.

While many aspects of recovery were complex in conception and execution, it may seem that issues concerning housing and construction would be relatively straightforward. It is true that, in the end, this came down to a question of the necessary logistics being available in the affected area to achieve repair and reconstruction to meet some simple planning guidelines. That said, accomplishing housing repair goals took great energy, expertise, commitment and goodwill by homeowners, insurers, builders, certifiers and inspectors and the many public servants in the public housing arena. The challenge was a complex one, and closely interwoven with the other imperatives of recovery, including human needs and rebuilding of the economy.

The Task Force espoused a goal of having all homes repaired to a weatherproof standard by 1 December 2006. This meant that insurers were encouraged to set themselves to have proper roofs, with no tarpaulins necessary, on the many hundreds of homes under their purview by the full onset of the approaching wet season. The same standard of course applied to those responsible for the stock of public housing in the cyclone area.

Gaining an appropriate number of builders and associated tradesmen and women to really attack the repair and rebuilding task was challenging. It was necessary to avoid a very steep price hike as the only means of getting lots of trade labour to move up for

the necessary months of work. Some expected price rises did occur but the number of tradespeople and the prices remained in fair equilibrium and much credit for this is due to the insurers who had the bulk of the trade workforce in their employ.

The repair efforts were chronically bedevilled by a further four months of wet weather. It is to the great credit of insurers, the building tradespeople and the Queensland Government public servants in the public housing area that the ambitious and difficult goal of repairing homes to weatherproof standard by 1 December 2006 was very largely met. It obviated a large number of people enduring a full new wet season with a tarpaulin as their major weatherproof protection. A small number of dwellings remain under tarpaulins, at last count 24, but these are in the main owned by absentee owners or people who have taken an insurance settlement and whose home repairs are now fundamentally in their own hands.

Of course much insurance-funded work remains to be done beyond the weather-proofing priority. For example, many homes still require internal repair and fitting out and this work will continue during 2007. Attachments 24 and 26, deal with insurance, repair and rebuilding issues in further detail.

Many excellent lessons concerning insurance and repair matters were learnt in the last year. It is however, important to note that the Task Force views the insurance industry response to the disaster as being broadly very positive, in the sense that the dimensions of the emergency were recognised and tackled seriously by insurance companies and industry representatives. This does not mean that experience with insurance companies has been universally satisfactory to homeowners, and nor would this be expected. It proved to be crucial to have special arrangements in place to handle concerns and complaints, and indeed this was welcomed by the industry. Industry representatives have been particularly vigilant to influence their membership to be quick, attentive and compassionate in relation to Cyclone *Larry* issues.

### **The Building Coordination Centre**

Although an essential part of the repair and rebuilding effort mentioned above, the BCC has been and remains such an important service organisation that it requires this specific mention in the Report.

The BCC concept grew out of the appreciation gained in the early aftermath of *Larry* that the issues of rebuilding were crucial, complex and time sensitive. Simply, the numbers of people urgently seeking entry into the complexities of the home repair process would immediately overload the normal resources existing in local jurisdictions. Building trade resources would be at a premium. The potential chokepoints of processing development applications, plan approvals, site inspections and work inspections may have significantly impeded progress as the new wet season inexorably approached. In addition, thousands of insurance claims would be processed simultaneously by dozens of insurers for policy holders very unused to the high financial amounts and complex issues involved.

The BCC was the major response to this situation. Set up in Innisfail in the first month after the cyclone, it brought together experts in the complexities of the building repair process to advise and assist consumers, to the extent possible, from first inquiry to the satisfactory completion of the repair work. Its work will be ongoing well into 2007, acknowledging the continuing case load of repair and rebuilding issues.

Importantly the BCC incorporated an insurance consumer advisory service of State-appointed independent advisors (Attachment 27). This was complemented by an on-ground representative of the (national) Insurance Ombudsman Service (Attachment 28) who worked from the One Stop Shop and in close collaboration with the independent insurance advisors. The combined result was a very great asset to advise consumers from an early stage and to help untangle knotty issues and to assist completion of insurance

funded work. These services remain operative but will be kept under review depending on workload. The BCC has been an important and successful recovery initiative and will be the subject of a recommendation later in this Report.

Attachment 24 provides a full account of the activities of the BCC.

### **Economic recovery and employment**

Without the Queensland and Australian Governments helping to rehabilitate the economy of the disaster struck-region, all of the humanitarian relief and recovery measures would have simply been band-aids.

Banana plants at all stages of maturation were knocked flat and all fruit was lost. Sugar cane was in general terms months from maturation, laid over flat, and very obviously damaged. Many fields of sugar or bananas were strewn with wreckage and tree branches from upwind sources, and this fouling was an additional impediment to recovery in each case. In the event sugar quantity and quality was down in the midyear crop, however all indications are that rehabilitation will be satisfactory for the 2007 crop. Although the size and economic strength of the sugar and banana industries meant that the major economic impact of the cyclone was felt through them, dairy, timber, tree crops, aquaculture and tourism industries were all severely adversely affected by *Larry*.

This of course rippled down into secondary and tertiary industry, compounded often by their own infrastructure damage and financial obligations. Not only was major industry deprived of the seasonally expected cash flow but the demand by primary producers for seasonal labour vanished in the few hours of the cyclone's destructive path inland. In addition, the financial position of many farmers meant their ability to pay reasonable wages to their standing labour force was in serious question.

Employment, a social and community well-being issue, also became a significant economic question in supporting the economic viability of the region.

The Australian Government, under National Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) immediately put in place grants, which were readily available as an initial support measure for businesses and indeed all eligible applicants. Within a few weeks the major 'broad brush' recovery measure for primary producers and businesses was fielded: concessional loans (of up to \$500,000 in extreme cases) on very favourable terms.

This was accompanied by a variety of employment support programs designed, firstly, to enable employers to pay a viable wage to their work force and, secondly, under special employment programs, to afford meaningful cyclone recovery related work to the unemployed, notably those who might have expected seasonal employment if the cyclone had not intervened. These employment programs met a dual need – to provide jobs in the region and to provide a workforce for reconstruction. In addition they provided access to training for a significant number of people and this will be of lasting benefit. A year on, employment in the region has been sustained despite the impact of the cyclone on the economy and is now once again solid.

The economic and employment support programs are described in more detail in Attachments 5 and 15.

While the major relief measures to assist business viability were financial, the Task Force believed it important to commence a dialogue with industry sector groups to gain the input of industry representatives and government experts on the issues confronting these sectors in their recovery. This dialogue focussed on the impact of the cyclone and whether any further measures, financial or otherwise, were sought and warranted.

These industry groups, jointly convened under the auspices of both the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries and the Department of State Development were a very productive and well received means of tapping into industry expertise concerning

the general state of health of the industries, as well as achieving the primary purpose of exploring and developing ways and means to enhance recovery. This process of discussion led to a large number and wide range of proposals and ideas concerning economic assistance. The role of the Task Force was to sift these suggestions, in order to formulate advice to the Queensland Government. As noted, the Task Force saw its remit as cyclone recovery, rather than longer term, structural industry issues. Once decisions had been taken about what was feasible and affordable, it was important that the relevant government departments provided feedback to industry. The experience of severe tropical cyclone *Larry* may have in fact enhanced the processes of consultation between government and industry in the region on a lasting basis.

With the sort of resilience you would expect of primary producers, the economy is now back on a viable and self-sustaining footing, with some sectors such as retail and rental accommodation enjoying a boost to their business. Construction and repair services also injected activity into the economy. However, full recovery still lies in the future for many businesses and some long-term casualties remain such as producers of tree crops, where their trees have been destroyed and new trees will take a number of years to produce cash crops.

### **The environment**

As well as the damage to buildings, infrastructure and crops, the overwhelming impression after the cyclone was of the way the destructive winds had torn apart the beautiful and lush rainforests framing these developed areas of Far North Queensland. Not only were places of great environmental significance brought low but the detritus blocked roads, fouled fields, flattened fences and destroyed animal habitats (e.g. some of those for the cassowary) caused concern. While in the main, the results of this damage across the large tracts of forest in the Far North must necessarily be left for nature to repair over time, fouled waterways can cause flooding, hazard crops, homes and other infrastructure and depriving farmers of expected irrigation. Equally crop and pastureland fouled with debris – mostly natural but also man made – is not fully productive.

Two major initiatives fielded during Operation Recovery were aimed at cleaning up this environmental waste. Each had the added benefit of providing both very worthwhile employment and training to local citizens. The first was Operation Farm Clear (OFC) which as the name implies was directed to cleaning up debris from farm acreage for its return to full utility. The second was the Preventative Waterways Debris Removal (PWDR) program, a waterways clean up program that commenced late in 2006, and which at the time of reporting has made excellent progress in clearing a number of high priority waterway sections in the *Larry* area. Both these important environmental programs and other significant environmental issues are described in Attachments 11, 13 and 17.

### **Public communication and involvement**

The immediate presence of the media in the aftermath of a natural disaster is most important to the relief and recovery efforts thereafter. It is through the agency of the media that the public receives the vast bulk of its information and frequently governments also rely heavily on media reporting to ascertain additional information to that being passed through official channels. In this case the media helped to mobilise support in a way not possible a generation ago.

If the media are unaware of the governments 'on-the-ground read' of the situation, what plans are unfolding, and what resources are being marshalled into the relief work, then this is an opportunity lost. Moreover, potentially inaccurate points of view, at cross purposes to what is actually being done, can be brought to the public perception. The bottom line is that the relationship between the people responsible for organising the relief and recovery, on the one hand, and the media on the other, is a very important

relationship to both sides. It is most important that there be efficient arrangements and sufficient resources to make this relationship work effectively.

In the case of severe tropical cyclone *Larry*, much individual good work was done within the early relief effort to support and brief the media. However, the media presence and capacity when natural disasters occur will only grow over time. The appetite for information, but also the value of the media as a channel of communication on relief and recovery matters will therefore also grow. Therefore greater support and briefing resources on the ground from the first moments of relief work appear justified. This will be the subject of a recommendation later in this Report.

Disruption of normal communication channels and sources of information for people is one of the first impacts in most natural disasters. Severe tropical cyclone *Larry* was no exception. The media did an excellent job in the circumstances, including the electronic media in providing real time information. However, as a general observation, the immediate (and it might be said in many disasters, invariable) loss of mains power means that the instant, pervasive reach of mass media falls away sharply – not even the ubiquitous world wide web will work!

In this regard, contingency plans for post-disaster communications have to focus even more clearly on redundant means of transmitting and receiving vital information. This is important from several points of view – the safety of life and limb, directing relief efforts by broadcast, and helping to maintain and restore public confidence in the disaster area and preventing panic.

In the case of *Larry*, not enough people had heeded advice to have battery-operated radios on hand. Televisions, phones and the internet were down because of the lack of power and many people observed to the Task Force that, in among all their wants and needs, this lack of broadcast information was the most disconcerting. There is a recommendation arising from this issue later in this Report.

This sense of disempowerment and thus disenchantment through ignorance can, and often does, become chronic through relief operations and into the recovery phase unless authorities take special steps to reach people no matter what their circumstances. It becomes a key task for those involved in any form of recovery activity to publicise their work and plans in a number of forms, in order to reach their target audience in some way.

As an integral part of the severe tropical cyclone *Larry* recovery effort, public comment was encouraged and often coordinated by the Task Force. One of the Chairman's immediate staff in the region was full-time on media relations and public communications. All methods were used – a custom made weekly newsletter, radio broadcasts, media 'blitzes', regular columns in newspapers, 'town hall' meetings, road shows, mail outs, community networking, and information pamphlets provided to 'drop-in' callers at the One Stop Shops, the BCC, and so on.

Naturally, this activity directed by the Task Force was strongly supplemented by government agencies, industry groups and NGOs using their own communications channels.

Press officers took on the wider role of information or public communication officers.

A procedure adopted by the Task Force to help it to understand how the recovery was proceeding in reality and in the mind of the community, was to conduct several customer and stakeholder surveys. These were done through discussions designed to sample opinion, rather than complicated, onerous, or time consuming opinion polling. One significant focus of this self-checking activity by the Task Force was assessing its effectiveness in getting its messages to the people in need of support and information. Mr Sandy Hollway, with his great experience as a senior public servant, his leadership role in the Sydney Olympics organisation and crucially his experience leading the recovery effort after the Canberra bushfire was a pivotal adviser on our need and ability to communicate widely and constantly. In relation to the derivation and maintenance of this recovery communication plan, a recommendation has been included later in this Report.

# Transitional arrangements

It is the nature of special machinery that it cannot and should not need to last forever. It was realised from the outset that one of the criteria of success of the recovery from severe tropical cyclone *Larry* would be the ability of the Government to wind down the Task Force at an appropriate stage and make a transition back towards government business as usual.

The passage from special machinery to business as usual can never, however, be abrupt in these circumstances. There needs to be a careful transition so that the baton of recovery is not dropped. The Task Force gave considerable thought to the timing and nature of transitional arrangements. The essential approach has been to:

- get a good understanding of the recovery work remaining to be done in each of the core areas of human services, rebuilding, economic development, environmental rehabilitation and public communication
- decide on the extent to which this ongoing work will require the retention of some parts of the special machinery (for example, the One Stop Shops or the BCC), perhaps in modified form, and for how long
- decide, by the same token, what ongoing work can be satisfactorily transferred back to the mainstream of government activity, and the timing for this
- specify, against this background, roles and responsibilities for the recovery, and a broad timetable for the remaining work.

The transitional arrangements are covered in more detail in Attachment 35.



*On the road to recovery.*

# Recommendations

This overview Report confines itself to a short number of significant recommendations, rather than a long menu of suggestions for consideration by the Government. There are two reasons for this. First, it can be taken as read that the organisational and strategic model adopted by the Queensland Government for the recovery from severe tropical cyclone *Larry* has very largely been successful. It could be replicated in similar circumstances in Queensland (or, it is suggested, in other jurisdictions) and adjustments would largely be of detail and at the margin. Second, as noted earlier in the Report, much of the credit for recovery operations lies with the agencies of Government and each of them have conducted their own process to learn the lessons and to formulate recommendations for the future.

## **Recommendation 1**

*This Report should be considered for publication so that the insights, data, conclusions and recommendations are available within Queensland and other jurisdictions to assist with disaster management issues in the future.*

## **Recommendation 2**

*A concerted effort should be made to engage NGOs and volunteer groups in contingency planning and preparations for natural disasters.*

It is very clear that the NGOs and volunteers step forward quickly and effectively when a disaster is imminent or has occurred. Also, volunteers of course provide vital services across the range of the needs of Australian society every day of the year. This includes, importantly, emergency services and human services.

However, there may well be untapped potential to draw upon the cooperation and expertise of the community sector, not only in relation to the more familiar matter of providing emergency services and immediate relief, but in relation to how the longer term recovery should be accomplished.

In particular, there should be dialogue and decisions about the division of roles and responsibilities, and where different organisations would best put their effort.

## **Recommendation 3**

*In any future disaster of comparable proportions, consideration should be given to the co-location of the BCC and the principal One Stop Shop.*

In the case of recovery from *Larry*, both the One Stop Shops and the BCC worked very effectively as points of coordination between different service providers and, more importantly, in providing a coherent service to customers. However, the fact that they were not co-located, nor under a common management, meant that these advantages of coordination and coherent service delivery were not fully optimised.

It is important to recognise that both human services and building assistance are specialised fields, each complex in its own right. Therefore, even with a co-located and/or jointly managed operation, there would need to be distinct but related teams for delivery of advice and assistance to customers.

At the same time, frequently an individual or a family in need of assistance would be facing interwoven strands of difficulties – with repair and rebuilding problems linked to other material or psychological pressures. Therefore, a fully holistic service for the customer would best be achieved by having the One Stop Shop and BCC under the same roof.

#### **Recommendation 4**

*That consideration be given to additional ways and means to improve broadcast capability into disaster-affected regions, particularly for the early aftermath of any disaster when a loss of power characterises the event.*

There are two issues here. First, while it is desirable that everybody who lives in a disaster prone area would have transistor radios with fresh batteries, experience shows that often people think of this too late and are left without any means to receive radio broadcasts. It may be that a useful capability for the emergency services would be to be able to deploy radio and loudspeaker kits to key locations.

Second, while radio networks, especially the ABC provided great public service by their emergency information broadcasts, experience shows that this information may need to be broadcast exclusively and repetitively for days or even weeks. In this regard, it would be useful to consider emulating a system used in other countries, namely the availability of specific, "emergency-only" radio broadcast frequencies in disaster prone areas, to be activated and operated where necessary as an adjunct to normal broadcasting. Broadcasts on the normal frequencies would cue people to tune to the "emergency-only" frequency for detailed disaster relief information.

#### **Recommendation 5**

*In any future large-scale disaster or event, consideration be given to a centrally-located Media Operations Centre.*

Such a media centre would become the focal point for raw information for the large number of media representatives, locally, from other parts of the State, and from further afield. As many of these people would not have local knowledge, it would be beneficial to have a central mustering point, where maps and other information guides could be handed out.

A central media centre would be ideal for media advisors and liaison officers from the many government departments, agencies and non-government organisations servicing the disaster region. It should offer an area to stage media conferences, plus sufficient room for media crews to work – and some separation of rival media crews may be needed as well. It should also be a centre where media advisors can be on hand on a rolling roster to answer enquiries and to keep in touch at ground level with media groups.

A media centre should also contain an area designated for information bulletin boards and a distribution point for media releases and fact sheets. The supply of electricity and information technology systems would be a vital part of any functioning media centre.

However, such a central point could also host breaking news conferences to help relay vital information about developments – especially when landlines and mobile phone systems may be cut or overloaded. A designated media centre could also host media conferences and briefing sessions at set times of the day or night – for example 10am and 2pm to allow media groups time to meet deadlines.

While information from such media conferences would not offer all the material needed by media crews on a daily basis, they would be a useful starting point.

Consideration would also need to be given to the number of media advisors needed to assist during any future *Larry*-sized disaster.

## **Recommendation 6**

*An early and high priority task in recovery from a natural disaster should be the development of a coordinated, succinct, practical and flexible public communications plan.*

It is probably inevitable, and certainly entirely understandable, that in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, everybody available will focus on delivering services and assistance to the people affected in one way or another, rather than on developing ways and means of communicating with the public over the longer term. In these early days, to the extent that there is an effort at public communication, it will tend to focus on the electronic and written media and to be broad in its targeting. In its early days, there is very important information to be provided. For example, information about what is not needed by the impacted community, so that offers of public support and assistance meet real needs. There will often be some level of confusion as people work frantically to respond to the disaster.

As noted, this is natural. However, it is very important that the development of a more coherent approach to public communications should not be repeatedly postponed and delayed. It needs to be recognised that effective public communications is not some optional add-on to the 'real' work of recovery, but a recovery service in itself. Furthermore, it is not possible that there can be efficient service delivery in relation to rebuilding, human support or any other aspect, without an efficient plan and machinery to get the messages on these matters out to the public. People need to know about the assistance which is being put in place for them, and how to access it. Effective public communication will also provide a channel back from the customer, permitting issues to be identified and services to be improved. Perhaps above all, an effective public communication program will be crucial to achieving community confidence, an intangible but decisive factor in the success of the recovery effort.

The public communications plan need not and should not be a highly polished plan of the kind which might be adopted by an ongoing private company or government organisation. It is more important to get something out quickly, which meets real needs, which is understood by the communications team across a range of government agencies and other organisations, which provides practical guidance to them, and which can be kept under review and adjusted as circumstances change. Typically, the plan must identify its targets, its main messages, the modes of communication which will be used, a non bureaucratic structure for coordination, and means of taking new challenges on board and adjusting the targets, messages or methods. As in every aspect of the recovery, it is the outcome which matters, not the detail of the process or the elegance of the document.

## **Recommendation 7**

*The Queensland Government should consider the endorsement of transitional arrangements proposed in this report, in order to ensure as far as possible the smooth completion of the recovery and the ultimate return to government operations as usual in the cyclone-affected area.*

This recommendation recognises, of course, that the government should not be slavishly tied to the detail of the transitional proposals. On the contrary, the recovery should be kept under review, so that the detail of the transitional arrangements might well be adjusted in light of experience.

# Conclusion

To step back now and look at the experience of the Task Force overall, there are several fundamental observations to be made.

It is impossible to achieve success in a venture of this kind without a unified and single-minded alliance between governments at all levels, the private sector, and community organisations. The task is too large in scale and too complex in nature for any kind of fragmentation or disputation.

This is not to say that there should not be division of responsibilities for leadership of different parts of the recovery effort. On the contrary, a key to success is clear definition of lead roles and responsibilities. The essential job of the Task Force and other coordinating machinery is then to provide a continuous oversight, coordination, and encouragement to the whole structure.

Nor is it to say that there cannot be differences of opinion on analysis, policy, and program design and implementation. As in any other situation in which government and the community are faced with major and complicated challenges, all the viewpoints and options need to be brought forward and thrashed out. But this must be done in a collegial spirit between organisations and people unified in their commitment to getting results.

This in turn relates to another major point about effective management of disaster recovery, namely the vital importance of generating momentum. It will rarely be possible to have all the desirable information and data when important decisions have to be taken. Judgement must be exercised and expeditious decision-making is the order of the day. The big building blocks for recovery need to be constructed fast and early, with the embellishments and even changes and adjustments made later on.

Finally, recovery is impossible unless the organisations and people responsible are operating within a positive and supportive community environment. The community will be the greatest source of ideas, resources, and that intangible but indispensable ingredient, confidence – the kind of confidence that becomes infectious and self-fulfilling.

Accordingly, the Task Force expresses its thanks and admiration to all organisations and individuals who have contributed so much to the successful recovery from severe tropical cyclone *Larry*, but above all to the strength of the community of Far North Queensland.

## List of abbreviations

<b>ADF</b>	Australian Defence Force
<b>AGCDTF</b>	Australian Government Counter Disaster Task Force
<b>AGDRC</b>	Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee
<b>AIIMS</b>	Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System
<b>BCC</b>	Building Coordination Centre
<b>BOM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology
<b>BSS</b>	Business Support Services
<b>CLCG</b>	Cyclone <i>Larry</i> Control Group
<b>CLEAP</b>	Cyclone <i>Larry</i> Employment Assistance Package
<b>CSAHSC</b>	Child Safety After Hours Service Centre
<b>CSSC</b>	Child Safety Service Centre
<b>CWA</b>	Country Womens Association
<b>DDCs</b>	District Disaster Coordinators
<b>DES</b>	Department of Emergency Services
<b>DDMG</b>	District Disaster Management Group/s
<b>DLGPSR</b>	Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation
<b>DME</b>	Department of Mines and Energy
<b>DMR</b>	Department of Main Roads
<b>DNRW</b>	Department of Natural Resources and Water
<b>DPC</b>	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
<b>DPI&amp;F</b>	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
<b>DTFTWID</b>	Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development
<b>EMA</b>	Emergency Management Australia
<b>EMQ</b>	Emergency Management Queensland
<b>EMT</b>	Emergency Management Team
<b>FaCSIA</b>	Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
<b>FNQ</b>	Far North Queensland
<b>FNQNRM</b>	Far North Queensland Natural Resource Management
<b>GVP</b>	Gross Value of Production
<b>IAG</b>	Industry Action Group
<b>ICA</b>	Insurance Council of Australia
<b>ICS</b>	Incident Command System
<b>IDMG</b>	Internal Disaster Management Group
<b>IDRO</b>	Insurance Disaster Response Organisation
<b>IOS</b>	Insurance Ombudsman Service
<b>IRO</b>	Industry Recovery Officers
<b>LDMG</b>	Local Disaster Management Group/s
<b>LGAQ</b>	Local Government Association of Queensland
<b>MBA</b>	Master Builders Association
<b>MHDRT</b>	Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team

<b>MSQ</b>	Maritime Safety Queensland
<b>NDRA</b>	Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements
<b>NDRRA</b>	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
<b>NEMCC</b>	National Emergency Management Coordination Centre
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Government Organisations
<b>ORIAG</b>	Operation Recovery – Industry Action Group
<b>ORTF</b>	Operation Recovery Task Force
<b>ORMG</b>	Operation Recovery Management Group
<b>PICRAS</b>	Primary Industries Cyclone Recovery Advice Service
<b>PSRT</b>	Public Safety Response Team
<b>QAS</b>	Queensland Ambulance Service
<b>QBSA</b>	Queensland Building Services Authority
<b>QCS</b>	Queensland Corrective Services
<b>QFRS</b>	Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
<b>QGIF</b>	Queensland Government Insurance Fund
<b>QPS</b>	Queensland Police Service
<b>QR</b>	Queensland Rail
<b>QRAA</b>	Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority
<b>QT</b>	Queensland Transport
<b>RFS</b>	Rural Fire Service
<b>RSM</b>	Regional Services Manager
<b>SBFOs</b>	Small Business Field Officers
<b>SDC</b>	State Development Centre
<b>SDMG</b>	State Disaster Management Group
<b>SERT</b>	Special Emergency Response Team
<b>SES</b>	State Emergency Service
<b>SHS</b>	State High School
<b>SIMT</b>	State Incident Management Team
<b>SOCC</b>	State Operations Coordination Centre
<b>SSB</b>	Specialist Support Branch
<b>SPER</b>	State Penalties Enforcement Registry
<b>TAFE</b>	Technical and Further Education
<b>WORC</b>	Western Out-Reach Camps

## **Department and Agency Contributions**

# Department of Child Safety

## Cyclone relief



*Department of Child Safety Far Northern Zone staff at the Larry Lunch held in Innisfail to thank them for their work in the Cyclone Larry disaster recovery operation.*

### Pre-Cyclone preparation

Child Safety Service Centres (CSSCs) in the Mareeba to Tully regional area were placed on alert and instructed to ensure that any necessary precautions are taken to secure office locations. CSSCs also took the opportunity to revisit the business continuity and disaster recovery plans for their centre.

### Immediate and Post-Cyclone period

On 23 March 2006, a team of 20 officers were deployed from the Department of Child Safety's central office in Brisbane and a further seven officers from Townsville to assist in the Queensland Government relief effort to Far North Queensland residents affected by Cyclone Larry. On 28 March 2006, another team of officers from around the state were deployed to continue with the relief effort. Many of these officers had disaster recovery experience and training in the past and were able to offer invaluable assistance, particularly to the hard-hit areas in and around Innisfail and Babinda. These officers were equipped to be self-sufficient, taking with them their own backpack, protective clothing, torches, transistor radios, personal first-aid kits, water bottles and food items not requiring preparation or refrigerated storage.

In total, the Department of Child Safety sent approximately 50 staff to the region to assist in the relief and recovery efforts. The department's own local service delivery capability was affected by the cyclone with the Innisfail CSSC losing power and telephones, and sustaining roofing and water damage. Urgent child protection issues were redirected to the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (CSAHC) and these issues were managed from this centre. The CSAHC continued to take calls on behalf of the impacted areas for a number of days while the local disaster response was initiated and child protection disaster recovery procedures took effect.

The Innisfail CSSC immediately invoked the centre's business continuity and disaster recovery plan which included alternate operations from the police station. The business continuity plan involved the hire of a large generator to power the CSSC. This was arranged and enabled the centre to operate and the CSSC was used as a hub to support staff affected by the cyclone. Temporary mattresses and washer and dryer facilities were purchased for staff and staff families to use, and the CSSC provided lunch each day for staff. These arrangements continued for a number of months through the disaster recovery period. The department immediately despatched Peer and Employee Support officers to work with Employee Assistance Services to support staff and their families in the cyclone impacted region.

Child Safety staff immediately located all children in care and their foster carers, and arranged for respite options for foster care families as required (there were approximately 70 children in care in the impacted areas). The travel times in the area were significantly extended and additional precautions and safety alerts were used to ensure that staff travelling were very aware of the environmental risks in the cyclone impacted areas. Child Safety staff also responded to calls from parents of children in care wishing to know the safety of that child. The department provided a range of additional support to foster carer families including providing six generators for use by carers where they were without power, distributing food, towels, clothing items and bedding mattresses and sheets.

## Cyclone recovery

Child Safety Relief Teams were deployed to work in the impacted areas for a number of months following the cyclone. These teams enabled the local teams to focus on the clean-up and repair of their own houses, to attend when insurance assessors were viewing their property, and to make general emergency repairs and safety steps to improve the safety and security of their own cyclone impacted property. The relief teams also enabled local teams to access the five days leave for those impacted by the cyclone.

The work of the local centres and the broader support from the Cairns CSSCs assisted in helping the Innisfail and Atherton CSSCs work through the post cyclone period. A range of positive feedback was received on the strengthened relationship that the department has with foster carers and non-government organisations (these organisations are funded by the department to provide child protection services). In addition, staff complimented the department on the quick response to provide a range of support resources on the ground. Local teams also provided reports on the positive community perceptions of Child Safety as an employer and the public recognition of the supportive work that Child Safety workers do in the community.

Child Safety staff checked with partnering organisations about their capacity to continue to operate and provide services. The department also held a Larry Lunch in Innisfail to thank all the staff from across the Northern (Townsville) and Far North (Cairns) zones who helped with the cyclone recovery work. In addition, a morning tea was held for local carer families to catch up and check how they were travelling. Families commended the department on the support they have received and are continuing to receive in the recovery from the cyclone.

The Department of Child Safety Recognition of Excellence Awards recognised the staff of the Innisfail CSSC, Atherton CSSC and Far Northern Zone staff for their collective response to the devastation caused by Severe Tropical Cyclone Larry. Staff were recognised in the formal departmental Recognition of Excellence ceremony and were awarded certificates and learning and development vouchers.

## The way ahead

The disaster response and recovery operations enabled the testing of local business continuity and disaster recovery plans and highlighted opportunities for improvement in these plans. The learnings from the Cyclone Larry disaster response and recovery operations have been applied to the disaster recovery planning process and revised plans are now being implemented. There is significantly greater organisational knowledge within the department as a result of the disaster recovery operations.

Business continuity and disaster recovery planning has been enhanced with the learnings from this operation. The nature of disaster recovery operations and the integrated response from all levels of government has given the department experience in disaster response, and further disaster response and recovery training programs are planned within the department. These programs will align with broader statewide training programs.

Planning activities have been impacted on by a number of the key learnings from the disaster recovery process. The impact of these learnings is outlined below.

The need for both child protection and disaster relief support was far greater than first estimated. Relief teams were despatched to undertake child protection recovery work as well as teams who participated in the overall disaster recovery effort. The Department of Child Safety sent approximately 50 staff to the region to assist in the relief and recovery efforts, and yet there was a greater need for further support and relief staff, particularly with the increased complexity of the child protection work. The key learning was to deploy a full child protection work team to work alongside local staff through the trauma, stress and the impaired decision making that occurs as part of working in the midst of a major disaster. Disasters force new and creative solutions, many of which need to be revised post incident. It was evident from early in the disaster recovery effort that relief staff would need to be sustained for at least a nine month period. Disaster recovery operations modelling within the department now includes costing assumptions that reflect these learnings.

One key learning was the need to work with government, local government and council staff to ensure that tracking mechanisms are in place to enable Child Safety staff to identify where children and young people had been moved or relocated to. It is necessary that Child Safety staff identify that children and young people in care are safe and cared for, and also to continue to maintain a connection with the family to ensure that appropriate case management and family support occurs. It was incredibly difficult for staff from the Innisfail, Atherton and Cairns offices to locate children and young people placed in temporary accommodation as part of the disaster response. Staff spent significant amounts of time during the first two weeks of the disaster contacting agencies to locate children and families. Better communication between agencies of the need for Child Safety staff to undertake this work will assist in the accurate identification of children and families and their exact location.



*Members of the initial Cyclone Relief team deployed by the Department of Child Safety to participate in the Cyclone Larry disaster relief and recovery operation.*

The child protection system relies heavily on community based early intervention and referral services to provide support to families who are not providing adequate care for children and adolescents. It is these same community based services which have been impacted on to provide trauma counselling and disaster support to those affected by the cyclone. These services have been totally consumed with the needs of the cyclone recovery effort and have minimal amounts of time to support those families needing support to improve the home environment to ensure that children and adolescents are safe from harm, abuse or neglect. The department is continuing to champion the cause to recover early intervention services to the communities of Innisfail, Atherton and surrounding areas. Forward disaster planning will need to take into account the dual needs of ensuring there is adequate trauma counselling and disaster support to families and those in need, as well as dedicated resources to support families in need of early intervention and referral services.

# Department of Communities

## Cyclone response

On the day Tropical Cyclone Larry struck Far North Queensland, the Department of Communities established a 1800 disaster recovery hotline, operated by Smart Service Queensland, to ensure all community members affected could get the information they needed about the support services available.

The very next day, Communities staff and partner agencies begin distributing financial assistance and other support in Innisfail, the Tablelands, Babinda and Edmonton.

'One Stop Shops', sites from which community members could access the range of support available, and outreach services were also established to make it easier for people to access support services and assistance offered by government and non-government organisations. By day eight of the recovery response, the Department of Communities had deployed more than 250 staff to the cyclone-affected areas and was operating 13 One Stop Shops and delivering a broad range of outreach services.

In the four months following Tropical Cyclone Larry, more than 400 visiting staff from across the state travelled to Far North Queensland to support the work of their colleagues and the recovery process for the communities in need.

### Department of Communities' role in community recovery

The Department of Communities has a lead agency responsibility under the State Counter Disaster Plan for community recovery, and it chairs Community Recovery Committees in affected areas. Following a disaster, the department is responsible for leading a range of community recovery services that are required to support affected individuals, families and communities.

Recovery partner: Red Cross	Recovery partner: Centacare
<p>Following Cyclone Larry on 20 March 2006, Red Cross Far North Queensland quickly mustered 80 staff and 430 volunteers from across the state and the nation.</p> <p>The organisation's role was to staff the 24-hour emergency evacuation centres at Innisfail TAFE, Silkwood and Tully and set up distribution centres at Innisfail and Babinda to supply essential items.</p> <p>Teams were also deployed into the community working alongside other emergency services. Red Cross volunteers worked with social workers from Centrelink and recovery workers from the Department of Communities; ensuring affected communities were provided with basic assistance in the aftermath of the cyclone.</p>	<p>Centacare is an agency of the Catholic Diocese of Cairns. It provided services and support across the Cyclone Larry region to people in need regardless of ethnic, political, social or religious affiliation.</p> <p>As with other community organisations, Centacare was involved with recovery efforts after Cyclone Larry and provided counselling services at Babinda, Tully and Innisfail.</p> <p>It also allocated a full-time community development worker for the recovery process up to mid-July 2006.</p> <p>This early support was much needed as it allowed continuity of staff who had prior relationships with community members.</p>

One of the specific services that the Department of Communities delivers on behalf of the Queensland Government is the joint Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements to alleviate personal hardship. This service includes the administration

of emergency relief and assistance through a series of three grants. The first of these grants (Phase 1) provides emergency financial assistance for items such as food, clothing and medication. Phase 2 assists with the replacement of uninsured essential household contents, and Phase 3 is for repairs of structural damage to uninsured, owner-occupied dwellings.

In the weeks following the cyclone, while the initial response was in full swing, the Department of Communities distributed \$5.5 million in emergent assistance payments to approximately 14,000 applicants under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements. These funds were provided through the 13 One Stop Shops and numerous outreach services established across the region. Distribution of this financial assistance began on the day after Tropical Cyclone Larry struck.

These arrangements are normally in place for 24–48 hours following a disaster, but in the case of Tropical Cyclone Larry, the timeframe was extended due to the number of affected people and to enable isolated individuals and families to access the assistance measure.

## Cyclone recovery

Under the state's disaster management arrangements, the Department of Communities is responsible for ensuring adequate and appropriate personal support, community support, psychological support and community development activities are provided. The department is also responsible for ensuring that local community recovery committee plans inform broader planning and decision-making activities across partner government and non-government agencies.

Services coordinated by the Department of Communities in relation to Tropical Cyclone Larry have been responsive, collaborative and flexible. This has resulted in the delivery of a wide range of integrated services to meet the very diverse needs of individuals, families and communities across the affected region.

Since July 2006, the department's community recovery services have been delivered from One Stop Shops located in Babinda, Innisfail and Malanda. The Babinda One Stop Shop closed on 31 December 2006 and local recovery workers are now based with a community organisation, the Babinda Taskforce.

Over this time, the Department of Communities has employed appropriately trained longer-term recovery workers and other business and strategic support staff to provide more stable, consistent staffing of recovery services and programs.

From July to December 2006, the department employed 95 recovery staff. The number of recovery staff reduced slightly in January 2007 in line with a gradual transition to the usual level of services provided locally.

Currently, 65 recovery staff are assisting community members, groups and leaders. These staff are continually revising and developing new types of recovery service responses to meet changing community needs, reflecting a 'best practice' approach to the delivery of services to communities affected by disasters.



*Charlotte Gilham, Department of Local Government Planning, Sport and Recreation working with the Department of Communities.*



*Brett Haywood, Department of Communities, speaks with Innisfail residents*

The Community Recovery Services program (the name given to the department's unit established to deliver services to affected communities) works closely with local and district support services and agents to provide a full spectrum of services to affected people and communities. This builds and supports the strengths of local groups, as well as allowing for the meeting of specific needs of the various communities and groups.

There are recovery agents providing specialist assistance to especially vulnerable families and communities, and to people who have lost their homes through the cyclone and who require government and other assistance to re-establish, repair or replace them. The department works alongside the Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal program to achieve this outcome.

Teams of recovery staff work across coastal and Tablelands communities, using case management, community development, and information, support and referral processes to assist affected people, families and groups. Currently, recovery staff work out of One Stop Shops in Innisfail and Malanda, supported by community-based and home-visit outreach services.

Through its work with other government and commercial agencies, the department actively supports the development and implementation of locally driven industry and cultural recovery programs. These programs will ensure the strengthening and rebuilding of local networks and support people and groups from diverse backgrounds. This work includes the funding of industry support officers as well as community events and celebrations that assist people and groups to return to the important pre-cyclone routine/schedule of their business and cultural lives.

#### **Recovery partner: Babinda Taskforce**

The Babinda Taskforce was formed in 1999 in an attempt to turn around the fortunes of Babinda, which was at the time beset by a downturn in sugar prices and an ageing and declining population. Since that time, the Babinda Taskforce has been able to implement many initiatives which have helped the town re-establish itself as a thriving community.

Following the devastation of Cyclone Larry, the Babinda Taskforce office quickly became a multi-purpose centre for communications, radio and TV studios, counselling and a central meeting place for emergency services.

It featured heavily in daily news bulletins being broadcast across the nation in the weeks after the event.

Today, the Babinda Taskforce is as busy as ever.

It continues its advocacy work for the local community and has secured funding from the Department of Employment and Training to provide recovery outreach services to the community. The Department of Communities also funds community development and administration coordination functions within the Babinda Taskforce. Two of the department's community recovery workers operate out of the Babinda Taskforce offices.

## Key achievements since Cyclone Larry hit

The department's response to its Cyclone Recovery responsibilities benefited from a very high rate of participation by staff from across the portfolio of the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors traveling to Far North Queensland. Almost all Far North Queensland staff of the department have been engaged in community recovery at some point since the cyclone, with visiting staff supplementing their efforts from March to July 2006.

The Department of Communities has coordinated and resourced its own and other agency support programs in the last twelve months.

## Overview of longer-term Recovery services delivered to date

The key recovery services delivered by the Department of Communities include:

- case management, community development, and information, support and referral services through One Stop Shop and outreach activities, and through an 1800 emergency assistance hotline
- administration and provision of financial assistance to all people affected by the cyclone (Phase 1), to people whose uninsured household contents were damaged or destroyed (Phase 2), and for the repair of uninsured owner-occupied primary places of residence (Phase 3).

The following data indicate the extent of the Department of Communities' service delivery across the region since the cyclone hit. The significant milestone of the 50,000th client contact since the cyclone was achieved during November 2006.

### One Stop Shop service delivery (as at 21 February 2007)

Number of contacts	Outreach visits	Counselling referrals
41,272	11,188	2,328

### 1800 emergency assistance hotline

- As at 21 February 2007, the 1800 emergency assistance hotline had taken 14,266 calls for assistance.

### Relief assistance — status (as at 21 February 2007)

	Applications received	Eligible applications	Payments Made
Phase 1 emergent relief (closed 9 April 2006)	—	14,000	\$5.5 million
Phase 2 home contents (closed 3 May 2006)	3,880	2,773	\$3.5 million
Phase 3 repairs to dwellings (closed 1 December 2006)	754 to date	294 to date	\$2.5 million to date

## Relief assistance – details

- A total of 258 Phase 3 payments have been made, 19 of which are for replacement caravans or repairs.
- A total of 277 eligible Phase 3 (repairs to dwellings) applications have been approved for Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements funding. To date, 104 of these successful applications have also been approved by the Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal for supplemental funding above the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements limits.
- A total of 189 client cases have been paid and finalised, however, these clients are still eligible to receive support regarding other personal or psychological assistance needs they may have.

### Indirect support programs include:

- Funding the placement of industry support and liaison officers in producer groups, including the Queensland Dairy Farmers Organisation, Growcom, and local community economic development agencies (e.g. the Babinda Taskforce)
- Creating and funding relevant personal and psychological support services for small business groups, primary producer groups and recovery 'helpers'
- Coordinating and funding relevant generalist and financial counselling recovery service roles through Lifeline and other partners of the Department of Communities (e.g. Atherton Neighbourhood Centre, Cardwell Community Support Centre)
- Coordinating and funding targeted, specialist recovery service responses to especially vulnerable groups (e.g. coastal Hmong community support worker, Tablelands men's support worker, Tablelands Indigenous community and family support workers, suicide awareness training).
- Working with local government and community leadership groups to enable learning from their Cyclone Larry experiences in order to better prepare for the current and future cyclone seasons
- Providing advice and support to the Department of State Development, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority on the development of industry recovery strategies and activities.

Recovery partner: Growcom	Recovery partner: Lifeline
<p>Horticultural industry group Growcom is a new partner working closely with Community Recovery Services across the cyclone-affected area. They have industry support officers at Tully, Innisfail and Atherton, who have been employed at the behest of the Department of Communities to work with horticulturalists affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry.</p> <p>These officers help growers access various funding grants to get their farm or orchard back up and running.</p> <p>"They can assist with the multiple applications for funding which are a problem for busy growers, especially at such times of stress," Growcom Chief Executive Officer Jan Davies said.</p> <p>Growcom officers can also source emotional and social support for growers and can meet growers out on their property as required.</p> <p>They operate closely with the Department of Communities, Lifeline and other community organisations and businesses in carrying out their role, as well as liaising with industry groups such as those supporting cane and banana growers.</p> <p>Growcom is part an advocacy body, bringing the needs and importance of these industries to the attention of government.</p>	<p>For more than 40 years, Lifeline has provided Australians with access to 24-hour counselling and handles approximately 500,000 calls per year from 59 centres.</p> <p>It provides face-to-face personal and financial counselling at many of its centres including through the Department of Communities' One Stop Shops set up in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Larry.</p> <p>By the end of January 2007, Lifeline had provided 1,393 counselling services to residents across the coastal and Tablelands communities.</p> <p>These counsellors will continue to provide centre-based and outreach emotional support and counselling services to affected people and families until at least June this year.</p> <p>Importantly, they work in close partnership with other local counselling and support services, as well as Queensland Health Mental Health Services,</p> <p>Lifeline also worked with Community Recovery Services from July to December 2006 to support and manage the counsellors and, importantly, to monitor and develop profiles of community need in relation to emotional support, so that the right services for the particular target groups could be provided.</p>

## The way ahead

The Department of Communities service model for 2007 includes a transition from direct service delivery to community-based service delivery, in line with evolving community need and knowledge of community recovery.

The current Community Recovery Services model is focused on building the capacity of existing local and district non-government organisations to increase the recovery support services they are able to offer to people and groups in their communities in the longer term.

From January to June 2007, recovery worker service delivery functions will be provided by two direct services – one on the coast (based in Innisfail), and one on the Tablelands.

The One Stop Shop at Innisfail will continue to provide immediate information, support and referral services to people affected by the cyclone. There will be an increased focus on providing community-based outreach services to outlying Johnstone Shire localities that were badly affected by the cyclone, as well as Babinda and Tully districts. The focus of case management in the first half of 2007 will be on achieving Phase 3 activities (that is, repairing, rebuilding and replacing uninsured dwellings). The One Stop Shop opening hours will gradually decrease as demand for these services reduces.

The Tablelands One Stop Shop (at Malanda) will continue to focus on providing community outreach services to the Tablelands area. Case management will focus on completing Phase 3 activities (that is, repairing, rebuilding and replacing uninsured dwellings). Similarly One Stop Shop opening hours will gradually decrease over time.

The One Stop Shop in Babinda closed on 31 December 2006, but two recovery workers are located in the area providing services to local people in collaboration with funded local and district non-government organisation recovery partners. This same model is likely in Innisfail and on the Tablelands post-June 2007.



*Department of Communities Kim Rayfield with Atherton resident*

### **Move to community-based service delivery**

As local and district services and groups recover from the effects of the cyclone, recovery support services are more able to offer services to people and groups in their communities.

The department offers funding for community support agencies to deliver services to affected clients, and also provides appropriate supports for these organisations and their staff to enable this service delivery.

Community recovery services still required by individuals and communities include:

- advocacy
- community development and support (including community education and cultural development)
- practical support
- information and referral
- case management of complex needs (intensive support).

## Key learnings

This has been the first time that the department has created a long-term discrete program response to disaster recovery, reflective of the scale, intensity and magnitude of the event. Because of this, there have been many learnings for this department and also other agencies and organisations with an interest in coordinating and delivering community recovery services.

One specific area of learning for the agency, for Emergency Management Queensland and for the federal government is the administration of the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements financial assistance program, particularly the Phase 3 (structural assistance). New policy has been developed, precedents set, and service delivery and administrative management models created that are transferable to future scenarios. In particular, the relationship between the Department of Communities, the Building Coordination Centre, and the Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal has proven critical, with each agency having important and inter-connected roles and responsibilities, all of which add up to an improved outcome for the affected person.

Another learning is that people affected by disasters and emergencies have a critical need for accurate and timely information. Although this sounds simple to achieve, in reality it is not. The Department of Communities has assumed coordination responsibilities for region-wide communication activities from the Operation Recovery Taskforce and will continue this role throughout 2007.

# Department of Education, Training and The Arts

## Education Queensland

Just over 12 months ago, Far North Queensland felt the devastating impact of Cyclone Larry. Natural disasters of this magnitude test the resolve of a community to respond in a positive way. The magnificent response by our principals, teachers and other departmental staff to the disruption caused by the cyclone in both the short-term and longer-term are testimony to their commitment to their students, the Department, and their community. Their contributions and efforts are applauded.



*Innisfail State High School - view from above*

The impact of Cyclone Larry on 20 March last year resulted in the temporary closure of 156 state schools. The worst-affected were in the Atherton, Cardwell, Eacham, Herberton and Johnstone shires where schools suffered damage to vegetation, fences and buildings. In the following days local principals, teachers and other staff played a vital role in helping their communities to get back on their feet quickly. Many went to extraordinary lengths to help clean up schools and community sites under very difficult conditions. A day after the cyclone struck 74 state schools were able to reopen, with many other schools reopening within a few days. Most schools reopened within a week but seven schools in the Eacham and Johnstone shires were closed for 10 days – the Eacham schools because of an unsafe drinking water supply and Innisfail State High School because of extensively damaged classroom blocks.

Twelve months later all of the major building rectification works have been completed and planning is well-underway to provide solutions for the facilities that were destroyed by the cyclone.

This report on DETA's Cyclone Larry process focuses on:

- leadership from Central Office, Brisbane, the Far North Queensland (FNQ) Region and District offices in Atherton and Cairns, and by principals in schools
- processes for restoring school facilities including buildings, school grounds, vegetation and fences
- replacement of damaged school resources
- human resource issues to do with staffing
- welfare issues around students.

The report looks at:

- activity immediately post cyclone
- longer term activity (ongoing issues, recovery achievements and review of disaster response procedures)
- anticipated future requirements and ongoing issues.

## Leadership

### Pre-Cyclone Larry

Schools received limited advance direction about possible closures or disaster preparation because Larry struck after the weekend when schools were empty.

The Director-General and the Regional Executive Directors of Far North Queensland (FNQ) and North Queensland communicated by phone on the Sunday evening and established a command centre in Brisbane headed by the Deputy Director-General, Education Queensland.

### Post-Cyclone Larry Relief

Within 24 hours of Larry crossing the coast, the Regional Executive Director, FNQ, established a regional response framework in Cairns. This included the Regional Executive Director, the Executive Director for Cairns District, the Principal Advisor Regional Services and the FNQ regional managers for Technology, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities. The Assistant Director-General Strategy and Performance, the Director Facilities Service Branch, and the Director Human Resources all joined the regional team in Cairns from Central Office in Brisbane.

An officer was located in the badly-damaged Innisfail area and the Executive Director for Tablelands-Johnstone District liaised directly with Atherton Tableland schools.

Communication was mostly by mobile phones. Formal communication by teleconference occurred twice a day between field staff, the regional team and the Brisbane command centre.

The first move was to establish contact with each school principal. This proved difficult because not all phone networks were working and after-hours phone contact information was not complete. Where phone contact was not possible, field staff made visits and provided mobile phones and chargers. Each Innisfail area principal received a daily visit from field staff for two weeks after the cyclone. Weekly teleconferences with each school cluster were also held.

Principals were responsible for communicating with school staff. Damage to the communication networks in some areas hampered this process.

Queensland Teachers' Union officers worked closely with regional framework staff in the first weeks post-cyclone. Information flow between the two groups proved invaluable in identifying issues from teachers and helping the leadership group to respond quickly.

The Director-General and the Deputy Director-General both made visits to the worst-affected schools and attended cluster principal meetings, which were valuable opportunities for information sharing.

### Cyclone recovery

After the three week acute phase of recovery, all schools were open by 29 March 2006 and normal leadership protocols resumed. School principals worked in their clusters with the Executive Director or directly with district office staff. Regional schools newsletters contained information about cyclone recovery processes as did communications from Regional Office. Regular teleconferences between school cluster principals and Executive Directors were held.



### **The way ahead**

In October 2006, work began on a FNQ Disaster Response Plan Framework for Schools which included the lessons learned from the Cyclone Larry experience. Each school in FNQ must now use the framework to develop their own plan. In addition, all regions, districts and schools across the State are required to have such a plan in place.



*Mourilyan State School*

During the recovery phase of Cyclone Larry it became evident that it is extremely important for schools to have close links to local disaster management groups. All schools have been encouraged to ensure this occurs so that the work of State Emergency Services and DETA is supportive of each other.

### **Commendations**

- Considering the widespread damage to so many schools, it was an outstanding achievement to have them all open again by 29 March 2006.

*The Watts Report*, commissioned by the Deputy Director-General in May 2006 to review DETA's management of Cyclone Larry, listed a number of commendations:

- All senior officers were commended for their leadership. Command centres in Brisbane and Cairns meant that effective strategic and operational leadership able to respond quickly to need. They also offered a contact point for handling media issues.
- Establishing a "Single point of Truth" concept in the Cairns office was a successful technique for regional and school staff in dealing with media.
- Regional Office administrative officers were praised for 'pulling together' to give schools essential resources, often at very short notice and at all hours of the day. "Response by Education Queensland was very good particularly when the decision was made to open the majority of schools on the Monday of the week after the cyclone. Requests for extra staff, food and water for students and generators were met quickly".

### **Facilities**

Cyclone damage to schools was extensive. Strong winds caused widespread destruction to vegetation on school grounds. Flying debris and fallen trees extensively damaged fence lines and buildings. All whirly birds on school roofs in the worst affected areas were blown off, which meant large quantities of rain water in the buildings. A classroom block roof at Mourilyan State School blew off and a double storey teaching block at Innisfail State High School was completely destroyed.

### **Post-Cyclone Larry relief**

Initial work concentrated on repairing school buildings against more rain damage and removing vegetation, broken glass and damaged building materials. Another priority was to provide safe drinking water supplies, water for toilets, and power. Asbestos contamination was also a concern at some sites. At Innisfail State High School, replacement of classrooms was essential. The highest priority was to ensure student and staff safety before the schools reopened.

The facilities response effort was directed by the Regional Response Framework and led by the Director Facilities Services Branch and the FNQ Regional Facilities Manager. On day three after the cyclone, five facility account managers were seconded from other district offices to carry out a facilities audit of every damaged school.

Relocatable classrooms were transported from Brisbane and erected at Innisfail State High School within five working days of the cyclone.

QBuild staff built safety fences around dangerous areas, boarded up broken windows and removed damaged asbestos sheeting from school grounds. They also began removing damaged vegetation from school sites.

Contract cleaners began to remove damaged carpet, suck up water and clean buildings and toilets.

At some sites, army personnel helped to tarp leaking roofs and remove damaged vegetation. Fifty workers from the Sunrise Building Team worked at Innisfail SHS for three days to repair damage.

### **Cyclone Larry recovery and ongoing issues**

After four weeks, QBuild took over the facilities repair work, in line with normal departmental protocols. While all major rectification works have been completed, there are still some minor works to be completed in some schools.

### **Recommendations**

- The sheer scale of the job to repair facilities sufficiently to allow schools to open safely in the time frame is extraordinary and all those involved should be congratulated.

### **The way ahead**

Strategies which should be part of future disaster responses include:

- placing a Central Office facilities manager in the regional response team, and using contract and volunteer labour for immediate repairs to facilities, and
- including a senior QBuild manager in the regional response framework to enhance alignment with Education Queensland activities.

### **Damaged school resources**

Because of water damage to school buildings, teaching resources, books, computers and other electronic equipment, classroom furniture, electrical equipment, office equipment and files needed to be urgently replaced.

### **Cyclone relief**

The resource replacement effort was directed by the Regional Response Framework led by the FNQ Regional Finance Manager and the Cairns District Senior Finance Officer.

Within 24 hours of Larry, Central Office staff had a financial process in place to offset the cost of resource replacement. Principals were instructed that they could use school finances to recover the incidental costs of emergency resources.

Many schools and businesses across the State donated resources to cyclone affected schools. While these donations were appreciated, they were not always the resources the schools needed in the immediate short term.

## Cyclone recovery and ongoing issues

Two senior finance officers visited all the worst affected schools from the beginning of Term 2, to help collate lists and finalise orders.

Schools received most of their ordered equipment and resources by the end of Term 3, 2006. Schools were able to apply to Regional Office for increased administration support, teacher aide time or teacher time to process the replacement resources and equipment. The cost of replacement resources and human resource support totals \$3.3 million.

## The way ahead

- Processes for resource replacement were effective and should be considered as part of future disaster responses.
- A process for effective collection and distribution of donations needs to be developed. Cash donations are preferable.

## Staffing

School staff welfare was a significant issue to be managed after Larry. Many staff sustained major damage to their houses. Others had crops destroyed on family farms or saw their partners' businesses badly damaged. Many teachers had personal teaching resources, lesson preparation documents and student records irreparably damaged. Some also sustained damage to personal equipment (e.g. laptop computers) left at school.

## Cyclone relief

The leadership team instructed Principals to contact staff to establish individual circumstances, inform them about school repairs and likely re-opening dates. Many staff worked in their schools to remove damaged equipment, carpets, and teaching resources as well as to clean classrooms. Some principals asked staff to attend meetings to deliver the information first hand and respond to any issues.

After schools opened, regional employee advisors and guidance officers were available to assist staff. Teams of volunteer teachers from the Cairns area were assigned to schools for the first fortnight. This allowed classroom teachers time to access counselling and support sessions. Teachers identified as requiring more intensive counselling were referred to the One Stop Shops set up by the Department of Communities. Information distributed to each school outlined support services available to staff.

The Director-General approved an additional five days natural disaster leave for affected staff. Principals were asked to support staff to apply for this additional leave on an 'as needs' basis.

### Cyclone recovery and ongoing issues

The Regional Executive Director wrote a personal letter to each staff member outlining leave provisions, the process for replacing personal items damaged at school and guidelines for replacing school resources and equipment.

In Term 3, 2006, the Regional Executive Director held breakfast meetings with all staff from affected schools. All staff were thanked and acknowledged for their help in re-establishing normal schooling post Cyclone Larry.

Accommodation for staff is a major issue in affected areas. There is a lack of rental accommodation - and any that is available is expensive.



*Innisfail State High School - view from the road*

Counsellors working with staff after the cyclone reported the most common need was to debrief. Occasionally, staff would present with mild depression (caused by issues such as destroyed house, house not repaired, arguments with insurance companies and difficulty in accessing leave.)

A small number of staff is presenting with post traumatic stress syndrome. The most common cause is the emotional stress of people still living in damaged accommodation. Many still have tarps over their roofs.

### **Commendations**

- Using teachers from the Cairns area to relieve staff from affected schools immediately after the cyclone was an effective strategy.
- Principals, teachers, public servants and ancillary staff deserve congratulations for their professionalism and efforts in the period after the cyclone.
- Breakfast meetings held across school clusters to thank staff for their efforts were appreciated.

### **The way ahead**

- The wellbeing of staff and students is of paramount importance and continued monitoring is essential.

## **Student welfare**

Cyclone Larry not only disrupted schooling, but also had a great psychological impact on the community. A regional leadership response framework goal was to ensure schools were made safe and operational as quickly as possible to allow students to re-establish some social norms.

Students in the worst affected schools were supplied with mosquito repellent, bottled drinking water and a hot BBQ meal each day for the first two weeks. Where there was a disruption to the power supply, generators were supplied to schools.

### **Cyclone relief**

An initial activity when schools opened was for teachers to provide opportunities for their students to debrief. In many instances, the debriefing process was modelled for teachers by guidance officers.

### **Cyclone recovery and ongoing issues**

At the beginning of Term 2, in a joint initiative with Queensland Health, Education Queensland officers began a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder screening program with students in the most badly affected schools. Each student and their parents completed a survey form analysed by Queensland Health staff. Six per cent of students received follow-up counselling. This formal counselling process ended in December 2006.

Some students did not return to their school after the cyclone. Reasons for this included the family needing to move away from the area to find work. Many students had not returned to their base school by the end of 2006.



## **Commendations**

- Teaching staff who did excellent professional work with their students, particularly just after schools reopened when teaching resources were limited.
- Regional office staff who supplied equipment, food, water and other essential items to schools on a daily basis as part of the relief operation.
- The joint initiative with Queensland Health.

## **The way ahead**

- There is an ongoing need for staff to monitor students - particularly when more severe weather is predicted or where students continue to live in severely damaged accommodation - and provide them with appropriate support services.

## **Tropical North Queensland TAFE**

### **Cyclone Relief**

Tropical North Queensland TAFE Innisfail campus is on high ground on the eastern side of the Johnstone River. Campus buildings and facilities are accessible from town in flood situations. The campus was designated one of three natural disaster evacuation centres in the Innisfail area.

Before Cyclone Larry, preparations were made to secure Innisfail TAFE campus and provide for potential evacuees. The Manager Innisfail TAFE campus remained to oversee operations and assist more than 170 locals who sought shelter during the cyclone. The campus manager and staff stayed on site to provide food and to clean facilities until other agencies were able to offer care and assistance.

The Tropical North Queensland TAFE facilities manager arranged transport to Innisfail to inspect the TAFE campus. The facilities manager continually worked for the next eight days evaluating, supporting and cleaning the Innisfail Campus and coordinating TAFE staff.

In the days immediately after Larry, client service and field officers from the Cairns office of Training Queensland volunteered to help the Department of Communities assess and process claims for assistance from residents. Each day they travelled to Babinda and Innisfail to help the recovery effort.

### **Cyclone recovery**

Tropical North Queensland TAFE Innisfail Campus was used during and after the cyclone as an emergency evacuation centre. It was then used by the Department of Communities, Centrelink, Australian Red Cross, State Emergency Service and Queensland Fire and Rescue as a relief centre for Innisfail residents. The campus also housed the Operation Recovery Management Group's headquarters.

Many Tropical North Queensland TAFE Innisfail, Tully and Cairns staff contributed their time and effort to restore campus services and help Innisfail return to normal.

For two weeks, Tropical North Queensland TAFE facilities, IT, support and administration staff travelled to Innisfail to help clean and clear the Innisfail TAFE campus and local primary school grounds, restore power, set up emergency bedding and emergency services, counselling, and childcare services.

With a substantial on-the-ground presence during the clean-up, Tropical North Queensland TAFE staff identified a number of emerging issues in Innisfail. These included

incorrect use of chainsaws and subsequent injuries among residents, health and hygiene issues due to power shortages and subsequent damage to refrigerated foods, and the need for trained labourers to help rebuild the affected region.

Tropical North Queensland TAFE helped the local community acquire the skills and training to put their devastated communities back together, by introducing free short course training in roofing, chainsaw operation, bobcat operation, blue card construction, first aid and safe food handling at the Innisfail campus.

298 locals received the free courses delivered by Tropical North Queensland TAFE over a three month period.

This initiative was identified by Innisfail residents as an excellent opportunity to gain relevant skills in a time of disaster.

While students at Tropical North Queensland TAFE Innisfail campus suffered severe disruption to their education and training, support was provided by the Institute on an individual basis. This included assignment and assessment extensions, counselling, and textbook replacement at no charge. Intensive support was also provided to Innisfail TAFE staff members experiencing difficulties after the cyclone. This support will continue until no longer required.

While Larry's category five winds caused widespread destruction across the region, damage to the Innisfail TAFE campus was light. Because it was given a lower priority than damage to private dwellings and crucial government buildings and services, the campus has not yet been rectified.

TAFE's Innisfail campus was recognised as a finalist in the 2006 Awards Australia - Regional Service Award, for its contribution to the community in the events leading up to and after 20 March 2006.

### **The way ahead**

The effective and timely response by Tropical North Queensland TAFE before, during and after Cyclone Larry is a blueprint for future emergencies affecting regions.

While coordination of TAFE activities was primarily managed from Cairns, the establishment of field managers in Innisfail meant direct lines of reporting and instant decision-making as needed.

This created greater cooperation between TAFE and the Johnstone Shire Council, as well as emergency services and government agencies, while also establishing good relationships and communication channels.

The multi-functioning role of shelter, trainer, and service and labour provider means the campus is established as a primary evacuation shelter for emergencies occurring in the Innisfail region.

Ongoing support for staff members experiencing difficulties as a result of Cyclone Larry remains a priority for the Institute. Support will continue to be provided by the Institute until no longer needed, and is considered essential.

The assistance offered to Innisfail by TAFE staff shows outstanding commitment and diligence, particularly in time of great need.

# Department of Emergency Services

## The Department

The Queensland Government's Department of Emergency Services (DES) is unique in Australia. It contains a number of organisations within a single portfolio delivering services covering all phases of emergency and disaster management – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The department incorporates the following operational services:

- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS)
- Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS)
- Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ).

The department's administrative divisions of Business Support Services (BSS) and Strategic Policy and Executive Services (SPES) provide strategic and business support to its operational services and volunteers.

The single-agency structure provides significant advantages and benefits to the community – having single-point ministerial accountability for emergency services, as well as the invaluable cooperation and coordination of operational staff during emergencies and disasters.

Those benefits were clearly demonstrated in the preparedness, response and recovery phases of Tropical Cyclone (TC) Larry last year.

### Preparedness

At approximately 4:00pm on Friday 17 March 2006, EMQ's State Duty Officer received advice that a low-pressure system situated off the North Queensland coast was likely to develop into a tropical cyclone.

Later that evening the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a computer network and liaison function at the DES complex at Kedron in Brisbane as a precaution in case the low-pressure system developed further over the weekend. EPA provides specialised monitoring and impact assessments of storm surge predictions as part of the State Disaster Coordination Centre.

By 8:00pm EMQ Regional Directors and core members of the State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) – the working body of the peak State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) – had been alerted to the low-pressure system and the likelihood of it becoming a tropical cyclone.

The low-pressure system developed into TC Larry during the early hours of Saturday 18 March 2006 and was headed on a westerly course towards the Queensland coast.

The Bureau of Meteorology forecast TC Larry would cross the coast near populated areas located within DES's Northern and Far Northern Regions.

A meeting of the SDCG was convened at 9:00am on Saturday 18 March 2006. The SDCG's objective was to be prepared, by 11:59pm on Sunday 19 March 2006, to provide support to communities affected by TC Larry and help them recover and return to normal.

DES also began initial preparations and planning for the deployment of personnel and equipment to supplement regional resources in areas likely to be affected by TC Larry.

The department operated the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) from Saturday 18 March 2006 at Kedron but scaled up to 24-hour/seven-days-a-week operations from Sunday 19 March – 24 hours before TC Larry reached the coast.

The SDCC coordinates state-level support to emergency and disaster management operations in accordance with the decisions of the SDMG and the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

The centre provides logistical, communication and operational coordination across all key functional agencies to support local response efforts.

The SDCC also ensures information about an event, and the response to it, is communicated to all who need to be involved.

Federal agency Emergency Management Australia (EMA), which had begun monitoring developments from Friday 17 March 2006, activated its National Emergency Management Coordination Centre (NEMCC) on Sunday 19 March 2006 – the day before TC Larry crossed the coast.

An extraordinary meeting of the SDMG was convened on Sunday 19 March 2006.

The SDMG is the primary mechanism through which coordinated whole-of-government state-level support is provided to disaster-stricken communities.

It is responsible for disaster mitigation, and disaster planning and preparation at a state level and for coordinating whole-of-government response and recovery operations before, during and after a disaster impact. This includes accessing interstate and/or Commonwealth assistance when local and state resources are exhausted or unavailable.

Also on Sunday 19 March 2006 the State Operations Coordination Centre (SOCC) was activated and further plans were put in place for deployment of resources.

The SOCC provides coordination in the event of large incidents, interstate or overseas deployments, or simultaneous multi-regional incidents such as fires, floods, pandemics, cyclones or the consequences of terrorist related incidents. It also monitors and facilitates communications and coordination among regions.

The activation of the SOCC allowed DES to access and deliver state resources to best respond to the needs of affected areas and individual regions.

The SOCC played a key role during briefings of the SDMG which occurred several times between midday on Sunday 19 March 2006 and midday on 20 March 2006.

A number of meetings of the SDMG were chaired by the Premier.

On 19 March 2006 two media officers and incident management teams were pre-deployed, as close as practicable to the potentially affected area, to ensure timely support could be provided to local communities.

At 4:00pm on Sunday 19 March 2006 during a teleconference, the Bureau of Meteorology advised the SDCG it had issued a severe tropical cyclone warning. As a result of this warning, at 5:00pm that day the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services signed a Disaster Declaration covering six districts.

Contact was made with the Mayors of every affected Council.

Voluntary evacuations of residents were encouraged on Sunday afternoon and these proceeded under local government and disaster district arrangements.

By Sunday evening mandatory evacuations of vulnerable coastal communities were enforced.

Also on Sunday evening the Prime Minister offered to support Queensland with any assistance required.

TC Larry crossed the coast south of Cairns between 6:20am and 7:20am on Monday 20 March 2006 causing damage to communities between Cardwell and Cairns, and continued on to affect areas as far inland as Croydon.

### **Response**

EMQ, QFRS and QAS personnel from the local regions together with Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel provided a critical emergency response capability in the first instance.

In accordance with the state's disaster management arrangements, DES staff also provided support to District Disaster Management Groups (DDMG) at Mareeba and Innisfail, as well as expertise to the Local Disaster Management Centre at Innisfail.

On the day the cyclone hit – Monday 20 March 2006 – the QFRS's State Incident Management Team (SIMT) was deployed to Cairns to establish a forward SDCC staffed with relevant state and federal representatives.

The aim was to mirror, in the local area, coordination activities required to support the disaster response.

A multi-agency Incident Management Task Force was formed, comprising personnel from:

- QAS
- QFRS
- EMQ including the State Emergency Service (SES)
- ADF.

The Task Force commenced the immediate disaster response, working under the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS).

AIIMS provided a common framework and language, which allowed personnel from the various participating agencies to be able to work effectively together.

Also, through its approach of management by objectives, AIIMS provided a structured and methodical way of organising response efforts and allowed for a focus on both immediate and longer-term needs.

Representatives of key agencies co-located in the Local Disaster Management Centre helped deliver a coordinated and effective response to the needs of affected communities.

Following TC Larry making landfall, the Director-General EMA convened a meeting of the Australian Government Counter Disaster Task Force (AGCDTF) at 8:30pm on Monday 20 March 2006.

Commonwealth Government departments and agencies represented on the AGCDTF included:

- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Australian Defence Force
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Coastwatch
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Centrelink
- AusAID
- Department of Transport and Regional Services
- Department of Finance.

In addition to the AGCDTF, an Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee (AGDRC) was formed to oversee the government's involvement in recovery efforts. The committee was chaired by Stephen Hunter of the Department of Family and Community Service and Indigenous Affairs and also had representatives from a wide range of Commonwealth departments and agencies, including EMA.

At the state level, all DES divisions – operational and administrative – were actively involved on the ground in the local areas impacted by TC Larry.

The state's disaster management system coordinated more than 6000 cyclone-related tasks across the affected zones throughout the response period.

During the three weeks after TC Larry's impact, DES deployed 1950 staff and volunteers to Far North Queensland – the largest such operation in its history.

Volunteers together with operational and support staff performed duties across a broad range of roles. Frontline operational staff including fire fighters and SES personnel were called upon to:

- tarp or otherwise secure buildings damaged by the cyclone
- clear debris from roadways and create access
- provide general support and labour for the Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) and District Disaster Management Groups
- carry out salvage operations
- conduct damage assessments through Urban Search and Rescue teams
- assist in the operation of the evacuation and welfare centre for Innisfail.

DES's coordination of the response to TC Larry included:

- coordinating the whole-of-government response
- coordinating emergency food and water supplies
- logistics management including provision of equipment and resources and coordination of donations of goods
- providing logistical and administrative support to the Operation Recovery Task Force.

The department's media liaison role in response to TC Larry was extensive. Its Public Affairs and Communications Unit had a media liaison team on the ground in Innisfail providing information and assistance less than 90 minutes after the cyclone crossed the coast. The media unit:

- coordinated thousands of interviews for media representatives and news organisations
- conducted approximately 450 media interviews directly, including more than 100 to international media
- coordinated more than 60 news conferences
- provided information for hundreds of stories on the work undertaken by DES staff and volunteers
- provided a liaison service with public affairs staff from the Defence Department and Queensland Government agencies
- provided support to Johnstone Shire Council representatives in handling a deluge of media inquiries between 23 and 30 March, as well as coordinating a special church service, speeches, and the visit to the area by Governor-General Michael Jeffery.

The response to TC Larry included the three levels of government – federal, state and local. The department played a key coordination role working with all three levels.

EMA's NEMCC coordinated the federal response to requests from the Queensland Government for assistance.

Approximately 20 EMA staff worked 24-hour shifts, staffing the NEMCC, acting as Emergency Management Liaison Officers in Brisbane and Cairns, and participating in multi-agency meetings.

Commonwealth Government arrangements for assisting communities affected by TC Larry were authorised by the federal Attorney-General.

The Attorney-General approved, and NEMCC coordinated, a diverse range of services and assets including:

- food and water
- tarpaulins
- showers and sanitation facilities
- generators
- communications equipment
- milking machines
- aerial reconnaissance
- transport for Queensland emergency and medical personnel
- satellite imagery
- Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel.

By 30 March 2006, the Attorney-General had approved 37 requests for assistance made by the Queensland Government.

The ADF deployed a range of personnel and resources to assist state response efforts.

The ADF response – following Queensland Government requests and designated Operation Larry Assist – was under the command of Brigadier Michael Slater, the Commander of 3 Brigade based in Townsville.

The ADF was formally requested through EMA to provide:

- helicopter reconnaissance for low-level damage assessments and potential rescue/recovery tasks as necessary
- transportation of a medical team plus personal equipment from Townsville Hospital to Innisfail.

The ADF also provided medical and engineering support, water purification equipment, initial damage assessments, and general humanitarian assistance.

During the TC Larry recovery operations, DES was also required to respond to the impact of TC Monica – a Category 3 cyclone that crossed the Queensland coast on Sunday 19 April 2006 around midday.

TC Monica impacted on the Cape York area of the Far North Region and, while not as destructive as TC Larry, still required resources to monitor and respond to over and above those already committed to the areas surrounding Innisfail.

## Recovery

DES directly supported the establishment of the Operation Recovery Task Force through provision of staff to undertake media liaison and secretarial functions and the provision of communications and information technology equipment.

The Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director Operations of EMQ played a key role in the early activities of the Operation Recovery Task Force headed by General Cosgrove. This included provision of early briefings for the task force and planning for the transition between the response and recovery phases.

The successful establishment and coordination of Queensland's first Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) led to a highly coordinated response effort that provided effective mechanisms to engage with the community and address emerging issues.

The task force-specific ORMG – created after the Prime Minister's visit to the affected area – facilitated ongoing discussions on the most relevant issues relating to recovery efforts and ensured effective reporting through government channels was maintained.

In recognition of the support by the three levels of government in the recovery process, each level of government was represented on the ORMG.

From a federal level, Centrelink had permanent representation on the group to ensure support for employment programs and the provision of financial support to affected individuals. A number of state departments were included in the ORMG including:

- Department of State Development
- Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
- Department of Public Works
- Department of Housing
- Department of Communities
- Queensland Health

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
- Department of Natural Resources and Water
- Queensland Transport
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport & Recreation.

The Chief Executive Officer of Johnstone Shire was also a member of the ORMG representing local government.

The ORMG coordinated outreach meetings in affected local government areas and a series of meetings was held fortnightly in each area.

DES was instrumental in the establishment of the ORMG and ongoing support through the assignment of staff who provided a management role and secretariat assistance.

DES also provided expertise to help Queensland Government agencies and affected local councils access financial support under Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA). In the second week following TC Larry's impact, EMQ deployed two staff as members of the ORMG, to provide direct NDRA advice. The deployment period extended from April 2006 to September 2006 and also addressed the needs of those affected by TC Monica.

During this time support in the form of policy advice, damage assessments, claim preparation, claim assessment and training was provided to:

- Johnstone Shire Council
- Cardwell Shire Council
- Cairns City Council
- Eacham Shire Council
- Herberton Shire Council
- Atherton Shire Council
- Mareeba Shire Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Council
- Hopevale Aboriginal Council
- Lockhart River Aboriginal Council
- Recovery Task Force Consultative Committee

On 22 March 2006 the Prime Minister announced that the Commonwealth Government would advance \$40 million under the NDRA in recognition of the scale and severity of TC Larry, and the immediate nature of the relief and recovery operations. The payment was made to Queensland Treasury on 27 March 2006.

NDRA funding helped provide:

- electricity generators to primary producers
- fuel excise exemptions
- free bus services from Cairns to Innisfail for residents and tradespeople
- funding of Operation Farm Clear
- funding of demolition grants which were not met by insurance.

EMQ managed the processing of \$216.2 million of NDRA support to local councils and state agencies.

### **Outcome**

The community's resilience and preparedness, as well as effective coordination under Queensland's disaster management system helped ensure there was no loss of life from TC Larry.

This highlighted and validated the benefit of regular inter-agency exercises and training which have been instrumental in ensuring high levels of coordination, collaboration and cooperation not just across emergency services but across and between the three tiers of government.

The response to TC Larry also provided a clear demonstration of the importance of resilient local communities.

A strong and capable volunteering base within a community is fundamental to being able to provide such a response. In the case of TC Larry the ability to draw on and mobilise 1055 volunteers of the SES and Rural Fire Service (RFS) was critical.

The rapid and sustained deployment of DES staff and volunteers including fire fighters, paramedics and as well as SES and RFS volunteers into disaster affected areas ensured that world-class emergency services were provided to help those in need.

The department is proud of its achievements in response to TC Larry and the departmental staff who played a key role in achieving the outcomes.

### **Future events**

DES evaluates its operational performance after any major incident or disaster.

The department has completed a disaster management review incorporating the experiences from TC Larry as well as other major international disasters.

An independent assessment of lessons learned from TC Larry, focussing on strategies to improve the scalability and responsiveness of arrangements, has been undertaken.

In order to identify lessons from the response to the cyclone, the department has also conducted three forums to explore the experiences and opinions of key staff from government and non-government organisations. These forums also involved representatives from relevant interstate agencies and Colonel Terry Ebbert, Director New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Public Safety from New Orleans City, USA.

The department also coordinated a Cyclone Summit in Cairns in December 2006, involving a range of international and national experts – an event that is to become an annual forum.

In addition, each division within DES undertook a process of identifying lessons learned from their response to TC Larry in order to address key operational issues.

The major lessons learned as a result of such forums, assessments and discussions include:

- the need to enhance arrangements in catastrophic disasters, which may overwhelm local capacity, to enable proactive action by the State, including supporting local governments by deploying teams of specialists
- the need to ensure plans for long term community relief and recovery are in place
- the need to work with local government to reduce community vulnerability and increase the resilience of communities
- the need to improve evacuation planning to ensure that there are plans to address the evacuation of vulnerable communities
- the need to establish a single incident management system as a basis for operations management during a disaster event
- the need to revise the State Disaster Management Plan to ensure that roles, responsibilities and management structures are clearly defined. Included in the revision of the State Disaster Management Plan is the need to ensure that government and non-government sectors are incorporated into planning process
- the success of conducting exercises for key stakeholders to ensure that individuals understand their roles and that relationships are established prior to disaster events
- the need to ensure that disaster management roles have specified competencies.

The implementation of recommendations flowing from the disaster management review will help DES further refine and improve its response to future events, but moreover will further strengthen the state's disaster management arrangements by ensuring they are more scalable, flexible and responsive.

# Department of Employment and Industrial Relations

This report covers the activities of the Department of Industrial Relations and the Division of Employment and Indigenous Initiatives (EII), which since the cyclone and its aftermath have merged to become the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations.

During the relief and recovery phases the department concentrated on two main areas of need:

- Employment assistance
- Health and safety, including electrical safety.

## Cyclone relief

### Employment assistance

The EII division of the then Department of Employment and Training was one of the first government agencies to respond to Cyclone Larry.

Following losses in the banana, avocado, sugar, lychee and other fruit growing industries, EII's General Manager visited the areas most affected on 23 and 24 March and met with fruit growers and other business operators, along with federal Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Peter McGauran and State Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin.

Initially, assessing the extent of the cyclone's impact on local employment was not possible because of the need for extensive rehabilitation work and the significant time lag for yet to be planted replacement crops to fruit. There was no doubt that the horticulture and sugar industries were the most severely affected, with the largest job losses in the banana industry, which employed 3,000 to 4,000 staff, of whom backpackers accounted for 20 per cent.

The General Manager concluded that a wage subsidy scheme similar to those implemented in previous natural disaster situations would benefit the community and help retain local workers. The subsidy was based on the Newstart Allowance, which workers would receive if unemployed. The Commonwealth Government then accepted the proposal in a modified form.

Immediate opportunities for workers also were identified in the infrastructure and general clean-up of the community, meaning the development of trade skills in building and construction was a priority.

As a result, a package of assistance measures was prepared for State Government's consideration and on 4 April 2006, the Premier announced a package to the value of \$18.56 million.

The Cyclone Larry Employment Assistance Package (CLEAP) consisted of:

- Up to 1000 local displaced residents to be employed for up to six months under the Community Jobs Plan to assist with reconstruction of public infrastructure and debris clean up - at a cost of up to \$14m.
- Workers displaced from industries, other than primary industries, who were unable to obtain alternative employment, were eligible for up to \$5000 assistance in job preparation, training and wage subsidies under the Queensland Government's Worker Assistance Program - at a cost of up to \$1m.
- Training funds for primary producers to assess the skills' needs of their workforce and to improve the skills of employees who were not able to immediately return to their jobs - at a cost of up to \$1m.
- Subsidies for local councils to employ an additional 20 trainees - at a cost of \$320,000.
- Funds to employ cyclone disaster relief coordinators to work with primary producers, state and federal agencies to implement assistance measures - at a cost of \$240,000.
- The Environmental Protection Agency put aside approximately \$2m for infrastructure works in National Parks. This was to be supplemented by 100 Community Jobs Plan workers engaged in the restoration of these parks.

In addition, on 7 April 2006 the department established a CLEAP Hotline to advise local people of the government's employment assistance package and to help interested participants. The hotline was staffed seven days a week and has continued its operations twelve months later. Almost 1000 calls were taken within the first six months.

### **Health and safety, including electrical safety**

The department swiftly provided information to ensure that practical safety tips were available to the community. Information was provided to residents, emergency personnel, workers and other agencies to prevent electrocution and exposure to asbestos. This response included fact sheets distributed on site, web information and liaison with other agencies.

The Regional Manager Workplace Health and Safety Queensland was appointed to chair an asbestos working group set up by the local government disaster committee to give advice on the safe handling and disposal of materials.

Twelve inspectors from WHSQ and the Electrical Safety Office were temporarily based in Innisfail and surrounding areas to provide advice and support. Staff in the Cairns and Townsville offices supported these officers by fielding calls from residents in affected areas.

The ESO also provided advice on electrical licensing matters for workers who were helping in the restoration of electricity, many of whom were from interstate or overseas.

## Cyclone recovery

### Employment assistance

#### ***Snapshot of assistance through the Cyclone Larry Employment Assistance Package –***

As at 14 February 2007, through the assistance measures of the Cyclone Larry Employment Assistance Package (CLEAP), a total of 949 people from the cyclone affected area have been assisted, comprising:

- 733 participants employed on Community Jobs Plan – participants were placed with community organisations, local council and government agencies to assist with infrastructure and clean up jobs. This included Operation Farm Clear run by the Department of Primary Industries which helped 900 farms clean up by using specially developed labour teams.
- 101 former workers in the local area were provided assistance under the Worker Assistance Program.
- 95 people received accredited training to upgrade their skills and/or gain a qualification.
- 20 trainees were employed by local and state government agencies.

A \$240,000 grant went to the Queensland Farmers' Federation to help establish an Industry Recovery Project, comprising twelve local officers and a central co-ordinator in Brisbane. The IROs proved to be a vital link in the combined industry/government efforts to get farm families and agribusiness back on their feet.

The IROs assisted 2500 farmers in the worst areas, handling more than 3000 calls for help. Importantly, government responses to calls for help were generous and timely.

### On-the-ground operations

Officers from the Department of Employment and Training (now Department of Employment and Industrial Relations) were actively engaged in implementing CLEAP initiatives. One Cairns based officer was immediately seconded to the Operational Recovery Management Group (ORMG) and still participates as a permanent member. Five Brisbane staff were temporarily transferred to Cairns to assist in the development of community jobs and training projects for displaced workers.

Flexible start and finish times for participants on the projects was introduced to ensure the casual employment did not jeopardise a return to other long term jobs or affect the flow of labour into local industry. A transition plan was developed to ensure the completion or extension of CJP projects coincided with local employment opportunities.

One of the many problems that followed in the wake of Cyclone Larry was a shortage of labour. Indeed, one of the key issues addressed in the Queensland Government's response to the cyclone's devastation was the need to keep local workers in the region. The CLEAP has helped but the huge disruption caused to the banana industry meant that labour shortages, particularly skilled labour, were still evident when the crops began to ripen late last year.

Other industries also suffering labour shortages throughout the state are attracting workers previously hired as labourers in the banana industry.

While the affected communities have supported the efforts made through CLEAP, the local banana industry has stated on a number of occasions that there will continue to be a shortage of local workers for their industry.

In response, the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations coordinated an Employment Summit for the banana industry on 4 January 2007 in Cairns, chaired by Minister John Mickel.

The focus was on barriers affecting the supply of primary industry labour in the region, both in the immediate and longer term future. Following the summit, the Department approved a \$120,000 grant to the Australian Banana Growers Council in partnership with Growcom to help plan for future labour requirements for the industry.

Funding will employ two labour coordinators for six months, with an option for extension for another six months. The coordinators will work with the industry and local employment service providers to address the immediate labour shortage. They will also develop strategies for the long term for the wider horticultural industry in North Queensland, as well as banana growing.

To further assist the recovery of the local banana industry, the Banana Industry Training Pathways project has been funded as part of CLEAP with support from the Australian Agricultural College Corporation. This project continues until October 2007 and will assist at least 100 people, initially focusing on chemical handling, disease/pest control, crop management and regulation.

The department ground staff closely worked with a range of local networks to continue the success of the CLEAP, including the appointments of an additional local field officer to manage the Community Jobs Plan projects.

CLEAP's main successes have been:

- The projects and ensured timely clean-up and restoration of public spaces, including National Parks and farms.
- It alleviated the potential for unemployed workers to leave the area in search of employment thus ensuring the horticulture and other industries had a substantial local workforce once production resumed. Over 949 local people have been assisted under the package and are now returning to their previous employment at local banana farms.

## Health and safety, including electrical safety

Workplace Health and Safety inspectors were brought into the Innisfail area from other regions to respond to increased construction activity, bringing a constructive working relationship with building contractors. The result has been the willingness of contractors to consult inspectors before starting new building projects and almost total compliance with safety provisions designed to prevent falls from heights. There have been no reports of significant injuries to workers engaged in cyclone clean-up and rebuilding work.

## The way ahead

### Employment assistance

The department plays a vital role in the recovery stage of disasters by providing jobs and training for people out of work. Without these opportunities, many people would have left their local community, prompting social and economic impacts and depleting the workforce.

#### ***There were a number of lessons learnt by the department in the Cyclone Larry process:***

- Improved coordination between state, local and federal governments in terms of matching employment opportunities with prospective employees.

Throughout CLEAP, the 1800 hotline was contacted by a number of employers assuming they could source prospective employees. These employers were directed to their local Job Network Member as the call centre did not have the authority to link employers directly with employees. Many opportunities, including the services of skilled trades people, were lost because the processes were not developed to enable this to occur.

While the department should not assume the role of a Job Network Member, a more coordinated approach to matching prospective employees and employers in a disaster situation needs to occur. These partnerships must be built now and tested to ensure appropriate and effective action.

- Employment and training should be considered an integral part of a disaster management and recovery response.

Much of the clean-up and restoration following Cyclone Larry could not have been achieved within the timeframe without the benefit of the Community Jobs Plan – Work Placement projects. There is anecdotal evidence these projects further supported community recovery by enhancing participants' sense of self-worth and contribution to the re-building and recovery of their community. Additionally, employment and training support enabled employers and employees to re-skill or up-skill to address problems and issues which emerged either directly or indirectly as a result of the disaster.

### Other lessons

- Traditional owners need to be consulted where employment and training projects may be considered beneficial for National Parks or native title areas
- All agencies need to commit to exit strategies as part of the planning processes to ensure smooth transition of participants back to the local labour force
- The lack of shared IT and communication systems hampered early efforts
  - agencies had varying levels of access to IT (including web based operations), different operating systems and a range of email protocols which impaired our ability to effectively respond in time.

The CLEAP is continuing to help people get their lives back together. As at the end of January 2007, approximately 35 people are still employed on existing Community Jobs Plan projects helping to rebuild communities. A significant number of previous CJP participants have now gained work back in their local community, including on the farms.

In addition, a number of Training in Communities projects will continue to help local people upgrade their skills and/or gain a qualification.

## **Health and Safety, including electrical safety**

The extent of damage and age of homes posed a significant problem through the potential for exposure to asbestos from damaged roof and wall sheeting. However, the constant rain after the cyclone kept many surfaces wet, thereby reducing the risk of asbestos fibre release.

Many builders, sub-contractors and workers came from other parts of Queensland and beyond and were unaware of Queensland's workplace health and safety laws, necessitating remedial action in some cases.

Immediately after the cyclone, there was a serious shortage of safety equipment in and around the area, including scaffolding, safety rails, safety harnesses etc. Inspectors went out of their way to provide advice on alternative safe work methods wherever that was possible, although strict enforcement was ultimately necessary to prevent unsafe or dangerous work methods in some situations, such as working at heights in wet weather. This problem has now eased with an extensive amount of safety equipment being made available from all over Australia. Inspectors issued a number of Improvement and Prohibition Notices.

As the rebuilding process gains momentum, further notices, including infringement notices, will be issued to recalcitrant offenders to gain workplace health and safety compliance. An additional inspector has been allocated to Innisfail for 12 months to assist in this effort.

Such disasters illustrate the need for greater flexibility in electrical safety requirements, but without compromising the electrical safety workers and the community. For example, permitting the temporary licensing of electrical contractors would assist the effectiveness of the response.



*This picture shows the exposed construction materials in a cyclone-damaged building - relevant to the asbestos risk of recovery workers.*

# Department of Housing

## Cyclone relief

Within the townships affected by Cyclone Larry, the Department of Housing has a direct (legal) responsibility for people living in departmental properties, in accordance with usual landlord responsibilities within the legislative framework of the Residential Tenancies Act 1994. Additionally, on behalf of Government, the Department of Housing played a critical role in responding to residents in the affected areas who had been displaced from their housing, and to ensure a coordinated approach between all agencies responsible for housing-related strategies to support medium and long-term community recovery.

The department's efforts in the region were supported by the additional 36 departmental staff who volunteered to go to Cairns and work in the department's Far North Queensland Area Office and in the One Stop Shops established by the Department of Communities. Staff and volunteers of the community-managed housing organisations in the region also provided, and continue to provide, valuable assistance to the housing recovery effort.

## Cyclone recovery

### Emergency accommodation

With the assistance of Tourism Tropical North Queensland, the department assisted 265 households (approximately 900 people) into motel or caravan park accommodation in Far North Queensland immediately following the cyclone. The ability of the department to provide this assistance was largely due to the support given by local tourist operators who, in some cases, renegotiated existing reservations to support households affected by this disaster. The majority of these households were living in their own homes or renting in the private market prior to the event but had identified that their homes were no longer safe or habitable. A case management approach was taken to assist these households move from emergency accommodation to longer-term housing. More than 100 families were able to move back to their properties following temporary repairs, or move in with family and friends while their homes were being repaired. Three families decided to relocate to other towns, 61 households sourced private rental accommodation and many of the remaining residents were assisted into temporary social housing.

The Residential Tenancies Authority supported households renting privately through the development of streamlined bond refund processes in partnership with Australia Post, and through advice given by call centre staff to over 360 callers.



*Social housing property identified for demolition*

## Social housing

There are 250 social housing properties in the cyclone-affected region. Early contact with community-funded housing organisations ensured the department considered both the immediate accommodation needs of all social housing tenants and the scope of works required to repair all properties.

The department worked closely with QBuild, the Government's construction and strategic building maintenance service, to assess damage to departmental homes, and quickly undertook extensive repairs to 12 badly-damaged properties including re-roofing, replacement of internal sheeting, installation of new kitchens and bathrooms, and repainting. Four unrepairable social housing properties were demolished.

Minor property repairs including glass replacement, roof repairs, debris removal and repairs to fencing were undertaken on many of the remaining social housing properties in Innisfail, Babinda, southern suburbs of Cairns, Tully and on the Atherton Tablelands.

To ease the financial burden on households immediately following the cyclone, affected social housing tenants were not required to pay rent for a period of 28 days from 20 March 2006.

Social housing tenants in damaged properties were also provided assistance with the storage of personal belongings through the rental and establishment of shipping containers on-site.



*Damaged social housing property in Hudson*

## Planning

A Housing Taskforce was established by the Department of Housing to ensure a coordinated approach between all agencies that have a responsibility for housing-related strategies to support medium and long-term community recovery. Membership of the Taskforce included representatives from the Department of Housing; the Department of Public Works (QBuild); the Queensland Building Services Authority; the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation; the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Queensland Treasury; the Residential Tenancies Authority; the Insurance Commission; and the Department of Communities.

Members from the Housing Taskforce also met with insurance company representatives to discuss strategies to monitor the need for temporary accommodation for insured households during the repair and rebuilding phases of the recovery. Insurance company representatives advised that many of their clients had decided to remain in their damaged homes or to make their own arrangements to stay with family or friends while repairs were undertaken and therefore additional assistance was not requested.

## Transitional response

Fifty-six vacant departmental homes were used to accommodate displaced residents until either repairs were completed or alternative private accommodation was sourced. Many were modestly furnished, enabling people to live with a degree of comfort at a time when most had lost virtually everything.



*Relocatable dwellings*

Surplus government multi-room transportable accommodation was sourced, upgraded, relocated and established in hotel and caravan park grounds in Innisfail, Flying Fish Point, Mena Creek, South Johnstone, Fishery Falls and Mourilyan. More than 120 rooms of accommodation have been provided for use by local residents and tradespeople involved in the rebuilding effort. These dwellings are managed locally by the proprietors and have provided much needed temporary accommodation to the region.

Larger relocatable accommodation suitable for families was purchased and established on departmental land in Innisfail and Babinda for use by local residents while their homes were being repaired. This response allowed families to remain in their local communities at a time when there was virtually no private accommodation available.

Registers of Need were established in Innisfail, Babinda and on the Atherton Tablelands, with the support of the respective local governments and community organisations, to identify and monitor the demand for temporary accommodation and to make referrals to the Far North Queensland Area Office. In addition, the Johnstone Shire Council Housing Officer continues to manage temporary accommodation on behalf of the department in Innisfail.

The department provided financial support, through brokerage funds, to Shelter Housing Action Cairns and Townsville Ozcare. These community organisations assisted families who were unable to return to their homes by securing alternative accommodation and purchasing essential household goods. Funding was also provided to Home Assist Secure Services in the region to help older people with the clean-up of their properties.

Loans to pay rental bonds and two weeks rent in advance were provided to many households able to access private rental accommodation in Cairns and Townsville.

Funding was also provided to community housing organisations in the region for the lease of up to 65 properties, to assist displaced households access private rental accommodation in the surrounding areas. Due to limited available private rental accommodation in the immediate area, many households decided to remain in damaged properties rather than relocate away from community support networks.

The post-cyclone relief effort has also seen the department implement creative and unique accommodation solutions, including the use of the former Babinda Nurses' Quarters. Following agreement with Queensland Health, the former Nurses' Quarters was substantially upgraded and furnished to provide up to 22 rooms of



*Former Babinda Nurses' Quarters*

temporary accommodation for mostly single people. This property, managed by Access Community Housing, has provided an opportunity for previous community members to return to Babinda and has given a much needed boost to the supply of single persons' accommodation in the region.

The Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service Queensland and the Tenants Union of Queensland assisted displaced private rental households to better understand their rights under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1994*, and their housing options, by conducting community information sessions and frequently visiting the area. They also distributed information sheets developed by the Residential Tenancies Authority.

To support community recovery activities, the department provided and established relocatable buildings for use as a temporary library and office in Innisfail, an office building for the Babinda Community Taskforce, and a temporary community hall in Babinda.

### **Longer term housing recovery**

Seven houses have been relocated from Townsville to Innisfail to replace demolished social housing properties and increase affordable housing in the region. These properties have been substantially upgraded, including new kitchens, bathrooms and laundries, and repainting. A further two properties will be relocated to departmental land in Babinda to further increase the supply of affordable housing.

In a funding partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, four factory-built homes have been established on departmental land in Innisfail for allocation to Indigenous families under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing program.

The department has also purchased two additional three-bedroom properties in Innisfail to increase the supply of social housing in the region.

The cost and supply of private rental accommodation has been identified as an issue impacting community recovery. Residential Tenancies Authority median weekly rent data, based on bond lodgements, demonstrates a trend of increasing rent in the cyclone-affected region of approximately 33% from March 2006 quarter to December 2006 quarter. While this trend is significant, it is consistent with trends being seen throughout Queensland. The median weekly rent for a three-bedroom house in Innisfail, for example, is \$230 compared to a State median of \$265.

### **The way ahead**

The department's post-cyclone response has resulted in a net increase of 11 permanent homes to the cyclone affected region, with the majority of these homes being allocated to applicants on the social housing waitlist. A decision about the longer-term use of the former Babinda Nurses Quarters as permanent accommodation for single people and the ongoing management of temporary accommodation will be made based on the ongoing demand.

While there has been no increase in applications to date, the demand for social housing will be monitored and the department will continue to work closely with local community organisations and the Department of Communities to respond to housing need on a case by case basis.

The department will also continue to provide bond loans and rental grants to eligible households who are able to access accommodation on the private rental market.

# Department of Justice and Attorney-General

## Cyclone relief

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (JAG) had an important role providing court and justice services for the north Queensland community in the lead up to, and aftermath of, Cyclone Larry.

As the cyclone gathered in intensity Courthouse registrars in Innisfail, Tully, Atherton, Mareeba and Ingham ensured all courts likely to be affected were as prepared as possible for the cyclone and that the community was aware of the closure of the courts at the time.

After the cyclone hit, relief staff were brought into the affected areas so that services could resume while local staff were able to attend to their personal situations. In Innisfail, the courthouse was cleaned as soon as possible and then it was set up as a base for the Department of Communities to issue disaster relief payments.

Magistrates in Cairns and Mareeba were also involved in the re-organisation of court services as a result of court closures. Courthouses at Atherton, Mareeba, Cairns and Tully reopened on 21 March with varying degrees of operational services.

## Cyclone recovery

After the cyclone, the Innisfail courthouse continued to be a major base for the recovery program, with the Department of Communities continuing to run its services from there until alternative arrangements were made. JAG also provided staff from its Cairns office to assist with the clean up and continue services from the Innisfail courthouse. This ensured courthouse services were provided to the community throughout the period following the cyclone. Staff members from Cairns were also sent to Tully to provide services from the Tully Magistrates Court to the Tully community.

During the period immediately following the cyclone, the then Deputy Director-General (now Director-General), visited the Tully, Innisfail and Atherton areas to aid in recovery works and oversee the operation of court services.

JAG, in partnership with Legal Aid Queensland offered a free legal service to residents affected by Cyclone Larry from 3 April. This service helped residents with legal issues that emerged after the cyclone and operated from recovery centres in Innisfail, Tully, Babinda and Atherton. A phone service was also established to provide priority legal advice to cyclone affected clients. Legal Aid Queensland also gave priority to applications for aid linked to Cyclone Larry. Overall, it was estimated that 185 people used these legal services in the wake of the cyclone.

The State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER), within JAG, is responsible for the collection and enforcement of overdue fines. In response to Cyclone Larry, SPER suspended enforcement activity in and around the cyclone-affected area. Although this enforcement was stopped, it did not prevent SPER from providing services to the affected area including providing information on options for disputing their fines and establishing payment plans.

SPER held a review of this system after three months, and as a result of the severity of the recovery efforts, this suspended enforcement continued. By suspending the enforcement of overdue fines, JAG was giving people in the cyclone-affected areas a chance to recover from the disaster without any extra monetary burdens. It has been estimated that 11,000 people in the area were aided by this suspension.

## The way ahead

The involvement of JAG in the Cyclone Larry recovery period was immediate and focused on providing emergency assistance that was efficient and accessible for the affected people. Court services resumed quickly and effectively and are again operating as they did pre-cyclone Larry.

The only service still requiring attention by JAG is the suspended enforcement of overdue fines. This suspension is still in place due to recurrent issues, such as recent flooding in the cyclone-affected area. Discussion will occur between JAG and the Department of Emergency Services about the timeframe for the resumption of normal operations.

Overall, JAG played an important part in helping the far north Queensland community recover from Cyclone Larry. The immediate response from JAG provided the community with information and support in the aftermath of the devastating event. The services provided, such as the free legal service, also ensured that people received vital long-term assistance to recover from the disaster.

# Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation

## The Department

The Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation (DLGPSR) plays a key role in supporting and partnering with local governments to provide services to the community, including assisting communities in times of crisis.

During the immediate emergency response period on-the-ground support was provided by the Department. In the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, the Department worked with the Operational Recovery Task Force, established by General Peter Cosgrove, and acted as a liaison point for communication with councils. The Department also administered the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) funding program which enabled local councils to clean up and restore damaged public assets. The NDRA funding totalled \$51.92m (to February 2007).

A further \$1.8m was provided to assist with re-establishing sport and active recreation to communities within the disaster area.

Feedback on the Departmental response included:

*“... the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements grants have been handled in an expeditious manner, which is most helpful and reassuring to Council and the wider community given the impact Cyclone Larry had on our region. Claims have been managed seamlessly and this has enabled the recovery effort to proceed promptly and unhindered”.*

Cr Mick Borzi, Mayor, Mareeba Shire Council

*“...your staff provided vital support during a time at which Council's human and financial resources were stretched to the limit”.*

Cr Ray Byrnes, Mayor, Eacham Shire Council

## Cyclone relief

When Cyclone Larry crossed the coastline and ravaged Far North Queensland towns, DLGPSR committed 24 Cairns-based staff to the initial relief effort. These volunteers worked in 'One Stop Shops' in Innisfail and Babinda, where emergency assistance was provided to the general public. A further 14 Departmental staff travelled to Cairns as volunteers, working as part of the broader relief effort coordinated by the Department of Communities. DLGPSR also made two four wheel drive vehicles available to deploy people to areas of most need and offered the use of the Lake Tinaroo Active Recreation Centre for the provision of emergency accommodation for local residents.

## Cyclone recovery

Following the state of emergency announcement in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, the then Minister for Environment, Local Government and Planning and Women, the Honourable Desley Boyle MP, endorsed a strong commitment to provision of timely and practical services to cyclone affected councils.

Providing individual responses to each council's situation and working with councils to meet practical resourcing requests were priorities. In March 2006, the Department nominated a senior officer to sit on the Operation Recovery Management Group, a sub committee of the Operational Recovery Task Force that was established to deal with on-the-ground operational issues in Innisfail. This appointment provided a link between the Operational Recovery Management Group and the Task Force Consultative Committee, which consisted of Mayors and Chief Executive Officers of the affected Councils.



The Department's priority was to assist councils in evaluating their immediate and ongoing needs, particularly in relation to emergency funding requirements for the restoration of damaged public assets.

One of the first tasks was the development of structural guidelines for homeowners, builders and building certifiers. The Department worked in conjunction with Timber Queensland to provide a practical guide for house repairs in accordance with North Queensland Cyclone Construction standards.



To ease the administrative burden on councils in the application for Natural Disaster Relief Assistance, Departmental officers travelled to North Queensland and visited each of the affected councils to provide practical support and advice in the development of their funding applications. Grant assistance to restore damaged public assets totalled \$51.9m to February 2007.

Further financial support was provided through the Sport and Recreation Cyclone Larry Disaster Relief Program released on 12 May 2006. The program provided one-off funding of \$10,000 to assist with the re-establishment of sport and active recreation within the disaster area. The program eased the financial burden of repairing and rebuilding sport and active recreation services, equipment and facilities. A total of 184 organisations received funding, totalling \$1.8m.

## Snapshots

### Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation Cyclone Larry Activities and Outcomes

The following table provides an overview of activities and outcomes for the Department's response in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry.

Activity	Outcomes
Operation Recovery Task Force Management Group	Immediate response to the call for a senior Departmental officer in Innisfail and to represent the Department on the Operation Recovery Task Force Management Group.
Task Force Consultative Committee	Representation of the Department on the Task Force Consultative Committee to provide a direct link between the Task Force, Mayors and Chief Executive Officers.
Partnering with councils	Senior Departmental officers undertook personal visits to the councils most affected by the cyclone to help with the assessment of financial and staffing needs.
'Builder's Guide for repairing cyclone damaged roofs in North Queensland'	The establishment of roof repair guidelines for builders from South East Queensland and other States to ensure work complied with North Queensland cyclone construction standards.
Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements Program	Provision of funding through the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) program to ensure councils received a timely response to meet their needs in the restoration of public assets.

Restoration of properties listed on the Queensland Heritage Register	Funding allocation of \$607,787 has been committed to the restoration of properties listed on the Queensland Heritage Register.	Six heritage listed properties within the Herberton, Cairns, Eacham and Johnstone Shires that were damaged by Cyclone Larry are currently being assessed for funding under this program.
Public Offers of Assistance Task Force Steering Committee	Membership on the Steering Committee for the distribution of public offers of assistance for individuals or community groups affected by Cyclone Larry.	Around 600 offers of assistance were reviewed and categorised. Letters of thanks were issued to those who made the offers.
Sport and Recreation Cyclone Larry Disaster Relief Program	This program provided one-off funding assistance of \$10,000 to eligible organisations to ensure the re-development of affected sport and active recreation clubs within the disaster area.  On 26 April 2006, the Sports Federation of Queensland (SFQ), in conjunction with DLGPSR, held a fundraiser to assist sporting groups affected by Cyclone Larry. The Department matched proceeds raised, dollar for dollar.	Organisations were able to re-establish their sporting or active recreation clubs. Tinaroo Sailing Club removed trees and debris from their club site, replaced picnic tables and replanted trees; El Arish Country Club removed damaged trees, purchased new equipment and replaced damaged shade cloth and golf nets; Tully District Cricket Association replaced damaged matting and netting, made repairs to the grounds and replaced club equipment; and Atherton Bowls Club replaced damaged fencing. Community morale was improved through sporting and recreation activities, including the Lake Tinarno Active Recreation Centre, which conducted a free Holiday Adventure Program for communities in Far North Queensland affected by Cyclone Larry. A total of 24 children participated in the programs, which were run at Currimundi, Tallegudgera and Lake Tinarno from 10-13 April 2006.  A total of \$109,782 was raised through the SFQ fundraiser. The funding will assist the local sport industry with ongoing recovery needs.

## The way ahead

The DLGPSR has comprehensively reviewed its activities in relation to Cyclone Larry. The Department is satisfied that its policies, practices and procedures are sufficient to meet any future emergency situations.

The James Cook Cyclone Testing Station, in conjunction with the Australian Building Codes Board, carried out an investigation into the structural performance of buildings following Cyclone Larry. The investigation report confirmed a reduced impact on houses built since 1980 under the Queensland Home Building Code and the Building Code of Australia.

Activity plans have been drafted to identify and schedule outstanding works following a series of meetings and liaison with individual councils affected by Cyclone Larry. These works will be claimed under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements program. The majority of activities have received funding approval, with outstanding claims in relation to restoration works to be processed as appropriate in a timely and efficient manner.

# Department of Main Roads

## Cyclone relief

The key focus after Cyclone Larry was to reopen the roads to allow emergency vehicle access. The Department of Main Roads and RoadTek worked closely with emergency services as well as providing assistance to local councils, other government departments, power organisations and the community in the recovery efforts.

Works commenced on reopening roads around Cairns within two hours of Cyclone Larry crossing the coast. Urgent works began while a full assessment of the damage was conducted and plans put in place for the clean-up.

The key priority for work crews was to open the roads to ensure emergency vehicles could get through as well as much needed supplies. In many cases staff left their own houses where damage had occurred, to help with the recovery effort.

### Monday 20 March 2006

Cyclone Larry crossed the coast on the morning of Monday 20 March 2006. Winds receded by 1:00pm and at this time Main Roads and RoadTek response commenced with officers dispatched to undertake an assessment of the damage to the roads.

Through discussions with Main Roads senior management it was established that the first priority for Main Roads and RoadTek was the reopening of the Bruce Highway and other main arterial roads.

The Bruce Highway was initially opened to emergency vehicles only.

Work commenced on clearing the Kuranda Range section of the Kennedy Highway and by the evening of 20 March 2006 sections of the Kennedy Highway were reopened to two way traffic.

The Captain Cook Highway reopened to traffic also at the same time.

RoadTek crews commenced clearing the Palmerston Highway.

Another RoadTek crew commenced clearing of the El Arish – Mission Beach Road from the Mission Beach end.

### Tuesday 21 March 2006

Main Roads and RoadTek officers completed a damage assessment by way of helicopter with other members of the disaster committee.

Three RoadTek crews commenced clearing the bottom section of the Gillies Range, on the Gordonvale to Atherton Road. RoadTek worked with Eacham Shire Council to clear the top section of the range.

Six RoadTek crews continued clean-up of the Bruce and Palmerston Highways.



RoadTek worked in partnership with Herberton Shire Council to reopen the Kennedy Highway, between Atherton and Ravenshoe.

The Bruce Highway was partially reopened Tuesday lunchtime, but still closed south of Innisfail, near Tully due to flooding.

Wednesday 22 March - Saturday 25 March 2006

Main Roads and RoadTek's primary focus at this stage was to work on all state-controlled roads and have them opened to traffic. This was completed by 25 March 2006.

Main Roads assisted Powerlink to construct a temporary high voltage tower near Babinda, to replace one destroyed in the cyclone.

RoadTek also assisted Ergon in removing fallen power wires and to stabilise leaning power poles on the Bruce Highway and the B-double truck route down the Palmerston Highway, through South Johnstone to the Bruce Highway.

Main Roads and RoadTek worked with Cairns City Council to clean up a section of the Gillies Range.

RoadTek assisted Herberton Shire Council to reopen the old Palmerston Highway to allow access for milk tankers to collect milk from dairy farms that had been cut off.

On Friday 26 March 2006, after advice from the Bureau of Meteorology that flooding had receded in Tully, the Bruce Highway was reopened to traffic.

Monday 27 March - Saturday 8 April 2006

A full contingent of RoadTek construction crews were assigned to clean-up in Johnstone Shire, including the Phase 1 clean-up of council roads and streets, inspection of all bridges and major drainage structures and inspection and repair of damage to sea walls at Bingil Bay and Johnstone River at East Innisfail.

The clean-up in Johnstone Shire Council involved eight RoadTek construction crews removing vegetation and building debris.

A specialist RoadTek crew conducted Level 1 bridge inspections on all shire bridges with Level 2 inspections arranged for a further three bridges in the area.

Four days after Cyclone Larry, all state-controlled roads were reopened. Main Roads and RoadTek then offered their assistance to local councils, other government departments, power organisations and the community in the effort to get power back, and clean-up debris.

Main Roads and RoadTek worked closely with Emergency Services following Cyclone Larry. In Cairns, Main Roads had a representative on the Local Disaster Committee, which helped coordinate the clean-up focus for Main Roads and RoadTek. This representative assisted in creating clear, two-way communication on priority areas for clean-up to ensure access for emergency vehicles was created as soon it was safe to begin works.

The State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) works with the Local Disaster Management Group to allocate resources and additional jobs outside the Main Roads and RoadTek area of authority. Each local government authority has its own committee which reports to the district disaster management group, through to the SDCG.

The usual Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements are to undertake emergency repair within the first 30 days, then prepare a submission to Emergency Services for full repairs costs. Due to the large scale of the damage from Cyclone Larry, a meeting was arranged with Emergency Services to outline the damage and seek approval for a strategy of repairs, which reduced approval times by six to nine months. This resulted in the repairs happening while there was sufficient moisture in the ground. Reconstruction works continued until the end of December 2006.

Over 180 staff from Main Roads and RoadTek along with contractors, banded together to assess the damage and clear debris from Cyclone Larry to ensure that emergency and supply vehicles could reach the region.

Main Roads and RoadTek received numerous letters and calls of appreciation for assistance provided, not only from councils but individual property owners in the cyclone stricken region.

The Honourable Paul Lucas MP, Minister for Transport and Main Roads visited the region and reported back to Parliament on the clean-up efforts.

"It is not as if they cleaned up one or two trees or 10 trees that had fallen across roads, but hundreds and hundreds that were a hazard to motorists," he reported.

"A specialist RoadTek crew also assisted in sea wall repairs at Bingil Bay and the Johnstone River at East Innisfail," the Minister said.

The outcomes of Main Roads and RoadTek assistance included:

- 36 RoadTek staff came in from annual leave and assisted with the relief effort, leaving their own families and homes which had been affected by the cyclone.
- Councillor John Giese of Cook Shire Council praised RoadTek staff in an article titled "Thumbs Up To RoadTek". The article described the great efforts of RoadTek people in clearing roads in and around Cooktown.
- Mission Beach - A property owner highlighted the "professional respect and extended compassion" shown by two Main Roads and RoadTek staff members regarding fallen trees in an adjoining reserve. After an initial inspection, it took just two days to have major debris cleared from the owner's home.
- Further Cyclone Larry relief - RoadTek continued in its support of the Cyclone Larry relief program by donating 89 computers from the RoadTek Standard Desktop Refresh Program, by way of the Education Queensland "Adopt a School" initiative.



## Cyclone recovery

Main Roads and RoadTek staff met daily with Johnstone Shire staff to coordinate the effort, during the clean-up operations.

It was a huge task for Main Roads and RoadTek staff to organise the replacement and installation of road signs, damaged or destroyed during Cyclone Larry. About 1000 speed, regulatory and advisory signs were missing or damaged on the Bruce Highway as well as 1500 signs on other state roads in and around Cairns and on the Atherton Tablelands.

Main Roads and RoadTek staff conducted a number of varied jobs in the clean-up efforts including:

- clearing and repairing roads
- assisting with resourcing issues
- removing trees from the highway
- conducting highway repairs
- helping on the ground with the clean-up
- removing trees and land slips with a loader
- analysis of river height information
- creating a combined Ergon / RoadTek team to ensure powerlines were safe on majors roads on the Atherton Tablelands
- switch assistance (including weekends)
- managing environmental issues
- assisting with traffic signals and lighting
- provision of plant and equipment
- administrative assistance with road condition reports
- assisting with maintenance phone calls and finance issues
- representing District Disaster Coordination Groups (Innisfail, Mareeba, Cairns)
- media and Main Roads senior management liaison
- conducting initial network inspections and assistance with road related issues
- assisting in managing crew for clean up
- representing Main Roads in the Disaster Coordination room
- assisting with signage and load permit issues
- conducting maintenance works
- supervising and organising access to damaged Powerlink towers
- coordinating traffic services
- managing communications with public, media and other stakeholders
- preparing road condition reports
- coordinating office and liaison with contractors to provide field support
- conducting initial inspection of network and analysis of road reports and river heights
- acting as a contact for Mareeba District Disaster Management Group and assisted councils
- managing cultural heritage issues on the Palmerston Highway.

## The way ahead

Communication within Main Roads Peninsula District and between the districts, RoadTek and other stakeholders during the first 24-48 hours following Cyclone Larry raised a number of issues as to coordination and responsibilities. Steps have now been taken to improve these issues:

- RoadTek has updated its Emergency Response Manual, previously only used as a contacts manual, to include pre-disaster event planning and coordination
- The RoadTek Emergency Response Manual has also been updated to address the role of the new Emergency Management Team (EMT) which has been set up in Peninsula District. RoadTek has 1-2 members on the team
- Peninsula District has also developed roles and responsibilities for the Emergency Management Team as well as procedures and communication plans for a more integrated response by the district, RoadTek and the other road stewards (local authorities)
- The RoadTek Woree depot in Cairns was significantly affected by the cyclone and was without power for a number of days during the response period, ultimately affecting their ability to contribute to the response. In February this year the depot was equipped with an emergency power generator to ensure business continuity during future extended power outages
- The recent flooding in Townsville (January - February 2007) was an opportunity to convene the Main Roads Peninsula District Emergency Management Team and review the department's pre-disaster responses and communication plans.

Following Cyclone Larry and the associated flooding that caused major disruption to traffic on sections of the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns, a \$220m funding package was agreed to by the federal government to investigate what was needed to upgrade a range of major flooding trouble spots between Cairns and Townsville. Locations investigated include the Mulgrave River Bridge and river and creek crossings north and south of Ingham, including the Seymour River Bridge.

Main Roads has completed the preliminary planning for the crossings, providing the necessary information for the projects to be considered further for federal funding.

Main Roads is continuing with detailed planning work and design, so no time will be lost in delivering the upgrade and meeting timelines agreed to with the federal government. The \$220m package is due to be completed by the end of 2009.

# Department of Mines and Energy (including Powerlink Queensland and Ergon Energy)

## Cyclone relief

The Department of Mines and Energy (DME) is represented on the State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) and coordinates information concerning electricity, gas, and liquid fuel emergency policy, and supplies during emergencies.

During Cyclone Larry, DME attended SDCG meetings in Brisbane and participated in the teleconferences with the district disaster coordinators. DME provided information on electrical outages in the affected areas, the supply of mobile electrical generators and restoration of electrical supply. This information was gathered from Powerlink Queensland and Ergon Energy who are responsible for the electrical supply in the cyclone affected areas.

## Cyclone recovery

Cyclone recovery for electricity was carried out by Powerlink and Ergon Energy. They were mostly able to operate with only their own resources. For the few instances where they required assistance, such as airlift for a electricity pylon and priority road access for mobile generators, DME assisted by relaying information on the assistance they required to the SDCG.

There was a high demand for transport fuel in the affected area for private and public vehicles needed for evacuation and emergency response, as well as for mobile generator requirements. This led to long queues at service stations. One service station was requested by the District Disaster Management Group to supply only emergency vehicles while others in outlying areas, who had managed to fit generators to their pumps, limited supplies to ensure consumers had access to some fuel. Liquid fuel supply issues were worked out at a local level by the station proprietors, local distributors and oil companies. No DME assistance was sought or required.



Cyclone-damaged powerlines under repair.

## The way ahead

DME has had several meetings with Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) to advise lessons learnt on electrical outages and recovery during the cyclone which would assist with future operations. Already DME has ensured that Powerlink and Ergon Energy are included in planning for cyclone operations and exercise.

Powerlink and Ergon Energy provided separate detailed reports on their participation in the cyclone. Their reports are included with this contribution to provide a complete picture of energy relief and recovery during Cyclone Larry.

## Powerlink Queensland

"On 20 March 2006, Category 5 Cyclone Larry unleashed its fury, causing the worst damage ever sustained on our electricity transmission network.

Our swift and effective response demonstrates Powerlink's capability and is a striking example of the innovation and dedication that lie at the heart of our approach to managing and operating our transmission network.

Our people's performance in managing the restoration efforts was strongly supported by the cooperative assistance and vast efforts of other organisations involved in the cyclone response, including the Department of Emergency Services, Department of Main Roads, the Australian Defence Force and Ergon Energy."

Gordon Jardine  
Chief Executive  
Powerlink Queensland

## Powerlink Queensland profile

Powerlink Queensland is a Government Owned Corporation that owns, develops and operates the high voltage electricity transmission network in Queensland. Powerlink's transmission network extends 1,700 kilometres, from north of Cairns to the New South Wales border.

## Cyclone relief

### Preparation

In preparation for Cyclone Larry's potential impact, Powerlink mobilised its Corporate Emergency Management Team, placing field crews on standby and establishing communication channels with outside agencies.

## Cyclone impact

The cyclone began to affect Powerlink's electricity transmission network at about 5am on 20 March, when high winds and flying debris forced the first high voltage transmission line out of service.

Despite the network performing to design, in the cyclone aftermath:

- seven 132 kilovolt transmission lines were out of service mostly due to wind carried vegetation and fallen trees
- five high voltage substations were out of service
- five steel transmission towers had collapsed, and a further two towers were badly damaged
- this damage was the worst ever sustained by Powerlink's transmission network.

Due to the damage to the transmission network, and the extensive damage to the local distribution network, more than 140,000 customers were without power supply. It was critical that the electricity supply was restored quickly.

## Immediate response

Powerlink's Emergency Manager's first actions were to oversee the assessment of the damage to the network, ascertain the extent of power interruptions to customers and to verify the safety and wellbeing of all staff in the area.

Together with Ergon Energy, the local electricity distributor and Powerlink's maintenance services provider in the region, emergency management plans were implemented, and a highly coordinated restoration effort was initiated.

Relief actions during the first 24 hours included:

- Powerlink's Emergency and Corporate Communication Managers relocated to Cairns providing a local base from which to manage Powerlink's response, liaise with key agencies and stakeholders, and manage communication with affected communities.
- Transmission line field crews from across Queensland were transported to the area to assess the damage, diagnose the problems and begin on-ground works. Hampered by poor visibility due to low cloud and heavy rain, and local flooding that prevented inspection by helicopter or vehicle, crews undertook the difficult task of inspecting some 800 transmission towers and 300 kilometres of transmission line to locate and remove debris, fallen trees and to repair broken conductors.
- Powerlink's operational staff coordinated the switching and earthing of the faulted lines and substations so that work could proceed safely. They also began planning the progressive safe restoration of the transmission lines and substations following completion of repairs.

## Restoration of transmission services

By the second day, two transmission lines had been returned to service, enabling power to be restored to four substations and helping to restore supplies to the cyclone-devastated communities.

To restore supply to the fifth substation at Innisfail, it was necessary to replace a collapsed tower at Babinda. With heavy flooding making road transport impossible,

Powerlink worked through the Counter Disaster Committee to obtain the assistance of the Australian Defence Force to airlift a fully-erected replacement lattice steel tower into position at Babinda. On the third day after the cyclone, the Defence Force Chinook Helicopter transported the 32 metre high, four tonne steel tower from Townsville to Babinda in just one and half hours.

Working again through the State Counter Disaster Coordination Committee, the State Department of Main Roads constructed a heavy vehicle temporary access track, using 2,000 tonne of gravel, which allowed the required 48 tonne crane to cross a flooded cane field to erect the replacement tower. By day four, Powerlink staff had completed works on the replacement tower and re-energised the line.

Bulk electricity supply had been fully restored to the cyclone-devastated communities of Far North Queensland within five days.

## Cyclone recovery

### Security of supply for Innisfail

While high voltage electricity supply to Innisfail had been restored, the area was reliant on a single powerline for its bulk supply, which was considered unreliable in an area known to be prone to storms and lightning. Additional restoration works were planned to improve security of supply to the area.

Most of the necessary tasks were undertaken using specialist live-line techniques, while the line was in service. However the final circuit alterations required a four-hour supply interruption to the Innisfail community. To minimise the impact on the community, the outage began at dawn on Sunday and a comprehensive communication campaign provided advance notice to the community. The works were completed successfully within the predicted timeframe, providing Innisfail with a more secure and reliable electricity supply.

Within two weeks of the cyclone, Powerlink's 132 kilovolt network in North Queensland was restored, with the exception of the Kareeya to Innisfail transmission line, an ageing line located within the Wet Tropics.

Due to access difficulties Powerlink was not able to complete a full assessment of the damage to the Kareeya to Innisfail line for more than three months after the cyclone. At that point, Powerlink determined it was not economically viable to reinstate the line to its pre-cyclone operational state, nor was it possible to complete such extensive repair work before the 2006/07 cyclone season. Powerlink made temporary repairs to the line in late 2006, so that it could provide an emergency back-up supply to Innisfail.

### Emergency procedures endorsed

The effectiveness of Powerlink's response reinforces the value of its Corporate Emergency Response Procedures and the regular training exercises in these procedures. It also underscores the worth of the cooperative assistance of other organisations involved in the cyclone response.

A full review of Powerlink's response to Cyclone Larry and emergency management documentation has identified strengths and some opportunities for improvement. As a result, the emergency management procedures now include a specific preparedness plan for cyclones. These procedures were tested during a joint exercise with Ergon Energy in November 2006.

## The way ahead

### Long-term high voltage supply for Innisfail

Powerlink continues to work to improve the long-term security of electricity supply to Innisfail and surrounding areas. To this end, Powerlink is constructing a new transmission line between Tully and Innisfail that will replace the badly damaged Kareeya to Innisfail line. While the Tully to Innisfail line was approved for construction prior to Cyclone Larry, the impact of the cyclone reinforced the need for the new line and its location on a more accessible coastal alignment.

The new Tully to Innisfail transmission line is being built to appropriate cyclone design standards. As such, it is expected to be able to withstand winds such as those generated by Cyclone Larry. The new line is expected to be completed in the summer of 2007/2008 (weather permitting).

### Emergency readiness

Powerlink is committed to maintaining and continually improving the effectiveness of its Corporate Emergency Response Procedures, and to sharing its learnings from Cyclone Larry with similar organisations.

## Energex

### Preparation

Ergon Energy has well established and routinely practised Disaster Management Plans. The scope of these plans includes preparation for major disasters such as cyclones. This assisted greatly in the effectiveness of Ergon Energy's response.

These plans are hierarchical in nature and deal with not only broad organisational response and planning but also local response include detailed local preparatory checks that occur at the start of each storm season and prior to each forecast event.

The scope of these plans include:

- People support
- Customer management
- Logistics
- Infrastructure repair
- Community information and public relations
- Electricity control
- Inter infrastructure-agency liaison
- Liaison with Emergency Services structures
- Internal management and control.

These plans had been fully reviewed, updated, and tested at the start of the 2005/06 storm season.

Cyclone Larry formed over the Coral Sea and was declared a tropical cyclone at 10:00am on Saturday March 18. By noon Ergon Energy had commenced monitoring the

situation. The first formal meeting of Ergon Energy's Disaster Management Committee occurred on Sunday morning 24 hours before the cyclone reached the coast and confirmed full readiness by Ergon Energy.

### **Immediate relief**

Cyclone Larry stuck the coast near Innisfail on the morning of Monday 20th March 2006. The cyclone caused extensive damage to the area between Tully and Cairns and inland on the Atherton Tablelands as far inland as Mount Garnett.

The cyclone caused damage to 3,700km of Ergon Energy and 600km of Powerlink lines over an area of 10,000km<sup>2</sup>.

The consequences of cyclone Larry included:

- 4 Bulk supply substations off
- 7 zone substations off
- 7 transmission towers damaged or collapsed
- 100 distribution feeders damaged
- 140,000 customers without supply.

Once the immediate danger from the cyclone passed, response commenced using crews located at Cairns, Atherton, Innisfail, Ingham, and Townsville.

In the less damaged areas, restoration of supply began immediately, but in the most severely affected areas initial operations focused on securing major access routes, provision of emergency generation to critical community infrastructure, and damage assessment.

With a primary accountability for restoring electricity supply, the initial phase of Ergon Energy's work focused on ensuring:

- the safety and health of our own staff in the affected areas
- supply to critical community infrastructure
- accurate and complete information to the community on the extent of damage and likely restoration times
- ensuring effective mobilization and planning to deal with what was clearly a mammoth reconstruction task.

As a result of the extensive damage, a comprehensive response was developed to restore supply progressively across the affected areas. This included:

- Mobilizing 1000 field and support staff from 6 companies over 3 weeks to assist in the restoration effort.
- Liaison with local disaster committees and other infrastructure providers to ensure the best prioritization of work.
- Regular and frequent public and media communication.
- Mobilisation of specialist disaster response teams within the National Contact Centre who maintained the call centres grade of service, despite 7,000 calls on the first day and 32,000 calls during the first week.
- Prompt and effective material supplies from across Australia, including the use of army helicopters to move critical supplies over flooded rivers.

- Prompt supply of electricity (via generators) to key essential services within 48 hours of the cyclone.
- Ergon Energy provided direct support to two groups of volunteer electrical contractors. One sponsored by the Sunshine televisions program and the second sponsored by the Electrical Trades Union.

This response occurred in a situation where:

- significant flooding and employee hardship was caused by over 1.2m of rainfall in the cyclone affected area during the restoration period
- the first cyclone warnings were received only 36 hours before striking the coast and all of this was during a weekend period
- aircraft operations essential for overall damage assessment was severely limited for several days due to low cloud and hilly terrain in the damaged area
- the access to many sites for heavy machinery was extremely difficult due to ground conditions
- local community infrastructure was severely compromised including water, electricity, accommodation, and food supplies.

Despite all the challenges and difficulty, Ergon Energy supported by Energex, Powerlink, and its contractors, restored supply to all 140,000 customers able to connect safely by April 13, less than 21 days after the disaster.

### **Cyclone recovery**

Ensuring a robust resilient electricity supply after the initial restoration was a key focus of Ergon Energy. Work continued to restore street lighting, alternate supplies and back up arrangements for a further four weeks after the immediate relief was completed.

In addition to this, Ergon Energy undertook a full inspection of its assets identifying :

- 175 pre-cyclone defects were repaired during the immediate relief phase
- 459 pre-cyclone non-urgent defects were confirmed to still exist which represents 72% of the defects that existed prior to the cyclone
- 204 new urgent defects and 1579 new non-urgent defects were identified primarily due to cyclone damage.

All of these defects have now been remediated and supply arrangements to the affected areas are now fully repaired.

## Key lessons learnt

The key outcome for Ergon Energy of reviewing our response is a confirmation that preparation is indeed the key to effectively managing disasters on this scale.

Well trained people, established plans, effective communications, interagency cooperation, efficient logistics, a scalable response, and a pragmatic cooperative approach are all critical.

While the preparation by Ergon Energy prior to Larry stood the company in good stead, there are some areas where improvements are being made to respond even more effectively for future events.

These include:

- Do not assume an effective community infrastructure will be in place to support your response crews.
- Acknowledge that the people you may have planned to use in your first response may not be available due to personal circumstances including personal loss or injury.
- Assess the damage and make plans as early as possible, refining the detail in your plans as more information becomes available.
- Ensure teams assisting in the immediate relief are fully self contained in terms of supplies, skills, and supervision.

# Department of Natural Resources and Water

## Cyclone relief

### Natural Resources and Water service delivery

The Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW) delivers land, vegetation and water management services in locations throughout North Queensland, including Innisfail and South Johnstone, the towns most severely affected by Cyclone Larry.

In Innisfail, NRW provides its services from an office in the Canegrowers Building which sustained significant damage to the roof and ceiling during the cyclone, waterlogging furniture and equipment.

The State Land Asset Management records, including decades of land dealing correspondence, also suffered serious water damage and had to be transported to Cairns to be dried out manually. A number of undamaged files were transferred to the NRW South Johnstone office for safe-keeping.

Overall, the damage at the Innisfail office was so extensive that the department was forced to relocate Innisfail service delivery operations to the South Johnstone office until September 2006 when the refurbished Canegrowers Building re-opened.

In South Johnstone, NRW is co-located in a relatively new complex with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Fortunately this complex sustained only minor cyclone damage, resulting in a power outage and a problem with the computer file server. The office was re-opened on 30 March 2006 using auxiliary power.

### NRW emergency response

In the period immediately after Cyclone Larry, NRW provided much needed assistance in and around the communities of Innisfail, South Johnstone and Tableland communities such as Atherton.

North Region nominated several of the regional management team to form a working group to oversee and coordinate the department's commitment to the emergency response, and to provide assistance to both departmental staff and the wider emergency response activities.

In order to avoid congestion in disaster affected areas, the working group limited all but essential travel to the Innisfail/South Johnstone areas and relied heavily on local departmental staff, particularly the Senior Site Officer for South Johnstone.

The most immediate issues included a lack of power and essential services such as plumbing and filtration. In an effort to counter this, NRW supplied the affected communities with generators, portable fridges and bottled water.

The safe removal of heavy debris and trees from private and public buildings throughout the area was also a major concern. In order to assist with this, the department provided the use of chainsaws to cut through debris and provide access to properties and infrastructure.

Manpower was also greatly needed and NRW responded by providing the disaster co-ordination team with nine staff, predominantly from the department's Fire Management Unit.

Each of these staff members was skilled in tree felling and clearing and worked long hours to ensure the safety of the local community. They removed problem trees from a range of key infrastructure, including a police station, a kindergarten, and a number of shops in the Innisfail locality.

One of the major tasks involved assisting the Department of Main Roads move debris in order to re-open the Palmerston Highway, which acts as the main transport link between Innisfail and the Tablelands. Re-opening the highway facilitated the delivery of major disaster relief supplies and equipment, all of which was vital in the early stages of disaster response.

Staff also assisted the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service in Millaa Millaa to remove problem trees, in order to restore power, and helped the Dairy Farmers Association remove trees from fences on the southern Atherton Tablelands, a task which took many months. In addition, they assisted many householders in the worst affected areas, clearing driveways and yards for the old and infirm.

In order to speed up the recovery process, NRW North Region loaned a large proportion of its fleet of vehicles to other agencies assisting in the disaster relief, continuing its own operations with a skeleton fleet.

Assistance included:

- Ten vehicles loaned from South Johnstone office to State Emergency Service (SES) on or around 21 March 2006. These vehicles provided the transport for a large number of SES volunteers who arrived in Innisfail from all over the State
- Seven vehicles loaned from Mareeba offices to the Disaster Coordination Centre on 23 March 2006
- Two vehicles loaned from Townsville office to the Department of Communities on 23 March 2006. These vehicles allowed additional Department of Communities staff to travel to Innisfail to assist in providing urgent support to affected members of the community.

Regional management was particularly proud of the way in which NRW staff supported one another, ensuring adequate accommodation, provisions and assistance wherever it was needed. Their team spirit resulted in the quick return to work of many staff on the Tablelands and in South Johnstone.

People from various NRW offices in the region, and volunteers from other regions, donated their time and energy to help clear roads and residences in the area, and the department itself provided assistance to affected staff through the loan of generators and car fridges, and the provision of fresh water, food and other donated items.

One NRW officer suffered immense loss when the government house she and her family rented was completely destroyed. The officer herself was injured during the cyclone and she and her family were forced to dig their way out of the rubble. A fellow staff member from South Johnstone provided a house for the family for two weeks until they were relocated to other government housing.

A photo of the injured officer became the face of Larry in many media reports about the cyclone both in Australia and overseas.

Another staff member, from the Cairns office, also appeared in media coverage after being seconded by the army reserve to assist with disaster relief duties in Babinda and Innisfail. As a Sergeant he led his own patrol in clean up activities in the nominated areas then assisted in the location and rescue of people cut off by the cyclone and inaccessible to SES personnel.

After much of the initial clean up, a barbecue was held at the South Johnstone site to thank all staff who contributed to the relief effort, both in the community and on departmental property. Costs for the barbecue were kindly donated by staff of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Administration Branch in Brisbane.

The event was a refreshing break for staff who had spent so long working for the community, while still dealing with damaged roofs, and a lack of power and water themselves.

## Cyclone recovery

### **NRW Innisfail office refurbishment**

NRW business was temporarily conducted from the South Johnstone site for the period of repair.

Total refurbishment of the Innisfail office was required, including a full gut and re-fit. Once cabinet works had been completed, replacement equipment and furniture was acquired and staff began to return to the premises. A temporary staff member was engaged to assist with the removal and relocation, and the office re-opened for business 25 September 2006.

### **NRW staff assistance**

After the cyclone, Employee Assistance Services were engaged to undertake group and one on one consultations in the South Johnstone / Innisfail area to ensure the physical and psychological well being of all officers.

A senior consultant met with 20 NRW staff from 6 – 9 November to debrief officers and their families. A group introductory session, whole group sessions, discussions with management, and individual counselling and debriefing sessions took place over the four day period.

Feedback from staff based at South Johnstone and Innisfail determined another visit from the senior consultant was both desirable and warranted. Further individual consultations were undertaken over the period 11 to 13 December 2006.

The senior consultant reported that, in addition to those needs that normally exist in a community after a disaster, therapeutic interventions, support and care were also required, and that early intervention was necessary to lessen the risk of emotional problems and stress disorders in the future.

Staff reported that the level of concern and support shown to them by the department was most appreciated and that the assistance provided by the Employee Advisory Service was invaluable.

### **Staff private accommodation**

In the wake of Cyclone Larry, alternative accommodation was sourced for one NRW officer when her government house was destroyed.

## Natural Resource risks

The department examined a range of programs affected by Cyclone Larry and the main risk to departmental business was found to be in the area of Land Protection, particularly in the national cost-sharing projects aimed at eradicating Class 1 declared pest plants.

The region initially redirected \$124,000 of base funding to assist with reducing this risk, and while not all of the funds were required, two crucial areas that did require funding included a campaign to prevent weed seed spread, and the provision of temporary staff to assist in program backlogs.

Weed seed spread was a serious issue after Cyclone Larry, particularly as vehicles and machinery involved in the clean up had travelled from various locations around Queensland and were entering an area subject to a national eradication program. One of the main concerns was that Siam weed, an extremely serious agricultural and environmental weed, would attach to cars, trailers, caravans and machinery and spread to other areas of the state (and interstate) causing new infestations.

In Australia, siam weed has the potential to seriously degrade large areas of the wet and dry tropic savannah grasslands, sub-tropical, coastal and conservation areas. It also has the potential to negatively affect agricultural and horticultural production including bananas, sugarcane and forestry.

In an effort to counter these risks, the department spearheaded a campaign to educate residents, businesses, government agencies and work contractors about how to wash down their vehicles before leaving an identified weed area, and how to ensure that all mud, seeds and plant parts were removed.

Departmental staff, in conjunction with council officers, undertook numerous inspections to ensure vehicles and machinery were adequately cleaned. In addition, a trace forward program was put in place whereby earthmoving contractors and other stakeholders were contacted and provided with a range of extension material.

Some 718 information packages were sent out by the department, with information also provided to media outlets around the State. As a final precaution, all contractors were contacted six months later to follow-up on the results of the campaign.

The national eradication programs for Class 1 declared plants also suffered as a result of the cyclone, predominantly due to backlogs caused by the wet weather and a lack of staff (many of whom were affected by the cyclone themselves, or seconded to clean up duty).

Funds were approved to employ a number of temporary staff to assist with these backlogs. These staff re-opened tracks to infestations in once dense rainforest, and conducted additional surveys to try and assess spread. They also assisted with programs such as Operation Farm Clear and the Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Project to ensure that the risk of weed seed spread was minimised.

## Recovery assistance

### Preventative Waterway Debris Removal (PWDR)

From July 2006 the Department contributed to the Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) coordination effort and attended community forums held throughout the cyclone affected area.

\$4M was approved by the State Government for the PWDR project across seven shires in the cyclone affected area. This continuing project is designed to prevent major damage to public and private industry related transport infrastructure, prevent residential flooding and major environmental damage due to excessive debris build up in waterways across the cyclone affected area.

The Department developed guidelines for debris removal in waterways and co-ordinated all state government approvals necessary to enable this work to proceed promptly including *Water Act 2000*, *River Improvement Trust Act 1940*, *Fisheries Act 1994*, *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, *Environmental Protection Act 1997* and the *Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002*.

This involved working within a range of natural resource legislation and policy for both the PWDR project and NDRA, and engaging with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

### Aerial surveys

The Department organised and delivered a complete and referenced aerial photographic survey of the cyclone affected area for general use in planning long term recovery. Unfortunately, these surveys were frustrated by continued rain for three months post-cyclone.

Limited use was also made of helicopter surveys. The inclusion of departmental staff in helicopter surveys, or the ability of staff to organise helicopter surveys for this purpose, would greatly help the planning of resource management activities following major disasters such as Cyclone Larry. It would also help facilitate consultation with natural resource managers, concerned stakeholders and FNQNRM.

Extended aerial surveys would also have indicated the extent of vegetation clearing necessary, including on Road Reserves administered by the department. It is a general consensus that some unnecessary clearing was undertaken throughout the area under the auspices of disaster clean-up. The development and availability of guidelines for road clearing would help prevent this in the event of similar natural disasters.

Some future helicopter surveys are planned for the national cost-sharing project for siam weed eradication in 2007 and 2008 to ensure that further local spread of siam weed has not occurred. Aerial surveys are an excellent tool in determining the current distribution of Siam weed because it is easily recognisable from the air.

Greater flexibility in engaging and deploying aerial survey services is needed after a major disaster of this kind, particularly where natural resource issues are concerned. Such flexibility is required to take advantage of any cloud free weather and facilitate natural resource impact assessments and risks including surveys of waterway debris and damaged river trust and drainage board assets, road clearing etc.

## River Trusts and Drainage Boards

The Department also co-ordinated Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) for the repair of the assets of four River Improvement Trusts and numerous Drainage Boards in Cyclone Larry and Monica affected areas to a total estimated value of approximately \$2 million.

After some deliberation Drainage Boards were able to link to River Trust arrangements. Drainage Board entitlements to NDRA need to be properly defined and documented in the NDRA guidelines as some delays were experienced in clarifying these arrangements in the absence of appropriate documentation.

## The way ahead

The Department's service delivery at Innisfail and South Johnstone has now returned to normal. Ongoing assistance is available to employees as required.

The PWDR project is also continuing in accord with the project plan and is expected to be completed late 2007. Lessons from the project to date are included in Recovery Assistance above.

The repair of River Trusts and Drainage Board assets continues and is expected to be completed in late 2007.

As a result of the Cyclone Larry experience, the Natural Disaster Relief Assistance guidelines have been reviewed in preparation for consultation and liaison with key stakeholders.

The preparation of road clearing guidelines and review of waterway debris removal guidelines following tropical cyclones is in preparation and expected to be completed in late 2007.

# Department of the Premier and Cabinet

The response from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to Cyclone Larry reflected its central agency role and its primary function to support the Premier in coordinating the government's response to a disaster.

The Director-General of DPC is the chair of the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) which had responsibility for the strategic direction and whole of government coordination of the Cyclone Larry disaster response and recovery.

## Cyclone relief

DPC's role in the initial response included:

- establishing the Operation Recovery Task Force (of which the Director-General was a member) and its governance arrangements
- ensuring the Premier remained fully briefed in a comprehensive and timely manner on all issues surrounding the impact of the cyclone upon affected communities and businesses
- establishing the Appeal Fund and the necessary support and administrative mechanisms to manage incoming donations (including setting up and staffing of a 1800 number, receipting, etc.) and the distribution of funds
- managing the volume of cyclone generated correspondence and inquiries immediately after the cyclone, including the many offers of assistance from the community and business, together with the significant number of inquiries from affected persons on the ground in the Far North
- providing support for official visits to the affected area including for the Governor-General of Australia, Governor of Queensland, and the Premier
- facilitating whole-of-Government working groups for the development of policy frameworks to respond to Cyclone Larry.

## Commonwealth/State Relations

In addition, DPC managed consultation with the Australian Government. The involvement of the Director-General of DPC and the secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet meant that information flowed freely and in a timely manner which facilitated swift decision-making.

DPC's alliance with the Australian Government and the commitment to work cooperatively with a minimum of red tape proved to be very successful.

During the immediate period following Cyclone Larry it became apparent that a number of medium to longer term assistance measures would need to be established to assist with recovery.

The Queensland and Australian Governments worked closely on developing assistance measures specific to the needs of individuals, primary producers and small businesses.

## Whole-of-Government Communications

DPC also developed a Communication Strategy comprising emergency assistance advertisements in all of the regional newspapers and initiating the development of a newsletter to be distributed from 26 March 2006 with regular updates. Initial updates included information on power restoration, sewerage, education, water and other important community announcements.

The Premier's website [www.thepremier.qld.gov.au](http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au) was established with key contacts and information about how affected individuals could obtain assistance. This website included links to major agencies involved in the recovery phases.

## Cyclone recovery

To deliver a dedicated response to the volume of work that quickly arose after the cyclone and to manage the longer term recovery, a temporary unit was created in DPC. This allowed DPC to centralise its overall coordination of cyclone related business across government, delivering essential governance and coordinated policy development.

Importantly, the unit provided a central point of head office contact and coordination for both the Task Force and the Operation Recovery Management Group and their support staff on the ground in Innisfail. It played a pivotal role in coordinating the diverse efforts of all state government departments and agencies.

A component of the unit provided executive support for the Appeal Fund Distribution Chair and Committee. This component of the unit will continue to operate until the fund is fully disbursed and a report on disbursements is prepared for the Premier.

## Recognition strategy

DPC also developed the Cyclone Larry recognition strategy for people who contributed to the response and recovery process.

A three tiered strategy to recognise the relief efforts of volunteers and paid workers was jointly sponsored by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

The strategy comprised of:

- A Commemorative Certificate and Pin for all nominated workers and volunteers involved in the relief efforts
- A Certificate of Special Commendation for nominated individuals who demonstrated outstanding leadership in the relief efforts
- A national honour in The Order of Australia, recognising extraordinary contributions and achievement. The Honours will be announced on Queen's Birthday 2007.



In February 2007, almost 12,000 certificates of recognition with a commemorative pin and 450 certificates of special commendation were distributed to nominating organisations for distribution to nominees.

Nominations for a National Honour for Extraordinary Service were forwarded to Government House in Canberra to be considered.

Two barbecue functions in Brisbane and in Innisfail were also held to thank those who worked in the aftermath. DPC also coordinated an Official Commemoration Function to mark the anniversary of the cyclone on 20 March 2007.

## The way ahead

DPC will continue the coordination and monitoring of Cyclone Larry recovery activities through its role on the SDMG.

The Distribution Committee for the Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal Fund will finalise the balance of the Appeal Fund. A report on disbursements will be provided to the Premier to be tabled in the Queensland Parliament. DPC will continue to support the committee until the final report is tabled.



*Operation Recovery Task Force meeting.*

# Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

## Overview

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) committed to delivering, as part of the Queensland Government's response, quick, practical and comprehensive assistance to impacted producers. Due to the significance of the primary industries sector to the economy and community of the impacted regions, DPI&F played a significant role in the immediate response and recovery efforts of the community.

This strategic approach was founded on a visit to the affected region in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone by the Minister and Director-General; excellent working relationships between the Queensland Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries and his Australian Government counterpart; and a regular series of Dialogues for Action by the Minister and Director-General, DPI&F, and the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry with peak industry bodies.

DPI&F was actively involved from the outset in identifying the impacts of the cyclone on primary industries in the affected region, reinforcing to Government a strategic approach to meeting industry needs for recovery and in identifying essential elements required under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) package to meet the key needs arising as a result of this disaster.

DPI&F made a significant commitment of human resources, with approximately 350 people deployed in north region, including extra staff from other regions that have been temporarily deployed. Approximately thirty people from DPI&F Brisbane were involved. All regional facilities, plant and equipment were made available for deployment as required.

DPI&F had a central role in the establishment of the Operation Recovery and Industry Action Group (ORIAG) established by General Cosgrove and the ongoing implementation of the Industry Action Plans developed by ORIAG. Permanent Industry Development Officers and Farm Financial Counsellors have been appointed to assist industry with implementation of these plans and ensure services are delivered and policy options addressed to restore the industries in the region.

## Cyclone relief

The State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) was advised of reports that a cyclone would intensify to a category 4 and would cross the coast near Innisfail on Monday. DPI&F is a member of the SDMG. The SDMG would meet weekly for the remainder of the response and into the recovery phase.

The DPI&F directed its response through the Cyclone Larry Control Group (CLCG), chaired by the Director-General. In the immediate aftermath of the Cyclone, the control group met each morning. DPI&F also activated the Regional Response Group and both groups focused on quickly determining how to best contribute to the government's response to the cyclone.

## **The Primary Industries Cyclone Recovery Advice Service and the DPI&F Call Centre**

The Primary Industries Cyclone Recovery Advice Service (PICRAS) was developed and launched immediately after Cyclone Larry to provide technical advice and assistance to growers and producers. Response Centres were set up at DPI&F main offices and research stations in the cyclone affected region.

The PICRAS was the face of DPI&F on the ground response and among other activities, helped producers to lodge applications for assistance, provide orchard and crop recovery advice and biosecurity services. DPI&F delivered PICRAS in collaboration with a range of Government organisations and private providers.

The DPI&F Call Centre became a prime source of information (phone 13 25 23). The Call Centre initially operated from 8:00am to 8:00pm seven days a week, including over the Easter break. Industry and general enquiries were fed through the Call Centre and the PICRAS centres to provide information or were referred to a range of DPI&F staff across Queensland to provide technical information and support. Other enquiries were directed to DPI&F staff on the ground in the affected region to provide hands-on support to clients, eg: to implement strategies for the safety and welfare of farm animals, crop trees recovery, conduct field observations for insurance claims and facilitate industry liaison recovery meetings.

Details of each enquiry was recorded and included in daily summaries which were reviewed by PICRAS staff and assessed for pending animal welfare and biosecurity issues. Reports of this information were provided daily to the CLCG.

The outcomes of this service was a steady and accurate provision of information to allow DPI&F staff to provide a quantitative and qualitative response to the emergency, receiving many accolades from cyclone victims, other Government agencies and the general public. The DPI&F Business Information Centre took 709 calls relating to Cyclone Larry and 1700 calls for Operation Farm Clear by early February 2007.

## **South Johnstone emergency accommodation for government agencies**

As one of the few Government locations of reasonable size in the area devastated by Cyclone Larry, South Johnstone Research Station became a temporary government centre for a number of government agencies. Initial difficulties were encountered as the research station had also lost power and it was some time before an adequate generator could be installed to restore power to the facility.

## **Dialogue for action**

Numerous meetings were held with industry and local community groups, however the dialogue that occurred among collectives of Industry Peak Body and Departmental CEO is and State and Federal Ministers provided a powerful and effective means of identifying and addressing issues. Five such conferences were held on a needs basis commencing 3 April 2006 utilising video and teleconference facilities across the state and provided an efficient means of co-ordinating state and federal policies and assistance packages.

The Dialogue for Action process was hosted by the Queensland Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Honourable Tim Mulherin MP and the Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Honourable Peter McGauran MP and the Director General from the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. This process was regarded as highly successful with fast tracking response initiatives.

Successful outcomes arising from the Dialogue for Action Forums include the integration of a number of new programs into NDRA, such as the provision of emergency power generators and Operation Farm Clear, and the enhancement of existing NDRA programs, such as the NDRA loans available through QRAA.

### **Animal welfare needs**

The animal welfare needs of intensive animal industries and of companion animals were compromised as a result of Cyclone Larry. Welfare events included mortalities, an increased incidence of disease, production losses, stress and suffering.

Intensive animal industries, in particular the dairy and aquaculture industries, have a high level of reliance on power for running milking machines, vats, cold stores, automatic feeding and watering systems and aeration pumps. Due to the severe disruption to domestic power supply, an urgent demand developed for the provision of adequate generators to run this essential equipment. Animal industries also required emergency assistance to repair damaged vital infrastructure such as feed and hay sheds, fences and yards.

DPI&F assisted with the provision of twenty nine generators to seven aquaculture farms (aeration purposes) and forty six dairy farms (mostly to run milking machines) at a cost of \$233,401.57, with \$224,951.13 claimed back through NDRA. Generators were moved around as power was progressively restored. Also, the supply of two portable milking machines via Hercules aircraft was organised by DPI&F. A DPI&F vehicle and trailer transported these milking machines on a continual basis for five weeks around dairy farms on the Tablelands. Electricians were contracted to assist with the installation of generators. Coordination through the SDMG and the Dialogue for Action process enabled this program to be rapidly integrated into the NDRA to ensure it was properly funded.

Many hours were spent liaising with livestock industries, the State Disaster Control Centre (SDCC), local councils and producers, assessing their needs, coordinating efforts, locating resources, foreseeing difficulties, and giving support and direction over the phone and on the ground in relation to welfare issues.

Companion animals rely heavily on human care. Many companion animals were separated from their homes and it took a large effort by DPI&F working with animal rescue groups to help re-house lost pets.

Departmental staff spent many long and emotive hours ensuring livestock and companion animal needs were restored as quickly as possible following the cyclone. Based on this experience, DPI&F is recommending that livestock industries have generators available or invest in alternative power generation programs to cater for future cyclones.

### **Impact assessment**

DPI&F took a leadership role in assessing the impact of the cyclone on local industries and provided this data to the Operation Recovery Taskforce and the Queensland and Australian Governments.

Preliminary economic assessment was undertaken by DPI&F of the direct impact on each industry in terms of lost Gross Value of Production (GVP) in consultation with industry and other Queensland Government agencies. DPI&F also estimated the flow-on impacts of Cyclone Larry using input-output analysis. The timely provision of these direct and indirect impact assessments set the groundwork for later economic modelling work and provided valuable information for the recovery process.

The total lost agricultural GVP due to Cyclone Larry was estimated to be \$473 million, representing fifty per cent of the agricultural output of the region in the twelve months immediately following the cyclone. The likely range of the total impact was estimated between \$365 million and \$545 million. DPI&F have undertaken a preliminary assessment of properties affected by flooding in the Gulf region. DPI&F is also assessing the flow on effects of the cyclone's impact on the workforce.

DPI&F assisted the Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research and Geoscience Australia to assess the broader economic impact of Cyclone Larry using a Computable General Equilibrium model in the following months, replacing the input-output flow-on impact assessment. This showed an estimated total economic loss of approximately \$500 million.

### **Banana Industry Interstate Certification Assurance**

DPI&F Biosecurity officers quickly recognised that major hardship and considerable wastage would occur on banana farms following Cyclone Larry's devastation of crops. Of particular concern was the potential loss of fallen banana bunches that could not be salvaged due to Interstate Certification Assurance conditions, requiring that hard green bananas could only be harvested from healthy plants of adequate vigour. Through consultation with other States, DPI&F was able to deem that cyclone flattened plants could still be harvested for two weeks after Cyclone Larry. As a result, banana growers were able to salvage some of their crop and market bananas in the major interstate markets.

### **Farm financial counselling services**

In the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, ten farm financial counsellors were rotated (three at a time) into the cyclone area to assist the two existing counsellors with the high demand for services.

## **Cyclone recovery**

### **DPI&F role in the Operational Recovery Management Group**

The forward group responding to Cyclone Larry moved to the recovery phase, forming themselves as the Operational Recovery Management Group (ORMG), located at Innisfail. The ORMG provided the Operational Recovery Taskforce with operational management in the delivery of recovery management arrangements in accordance with Government policy and community expectations. The ORMG also provided advice to the SDMG and undertook tasks as directed. DPI&F played an active role in ORMG, and its role focussed on the longer term economic recovery needs of primary producers.

### **Industry Recovery Officers**

The appointment of eight Industry Recovery Officers (IROs) working directly with industry for a period of six months was a joint initiative of the Department of Employment and Training and the DPI&F. The IROs were employed and co-ordinated by the Queensland Farmers Federation and they played a crucial role by making direct contact with producers in the aftermath of the cyclone to assist with the provision of basic necessities, to provide moral support and assist with applications for assistance. Generally, these officers already had some recognition in the local industry. The IROs provided a valuable service to each industry, for example, the Dairy IRO was able to

ensure that every dairy farmer accessed the \$25,000 business recovery grants available through Centrelink.

### **Cyclone Larry assistance seminars**

Over twenty seminars were held throughout the region in the first month following the cyclone and provided producers with information on the assistance measures that were available.

### **Farm financial counsellors**

Between April and December 2006, 228 individual enterprises received detailed financial counselling assistance. Counsellors assisted with examinations of the producer's options, development of QRAA loan applications, bank reviews and negotiations.

### **Hmong and Sikh Communities**

Services were provided to assist the local Hmong community as consideration was given to potential language barriers to access assistance. A dedicated Community Liaison Officer was initially appointed to support Hmong banana farmers, but this service was expanded to support the Indian Sikh and Hmong townsfolk in Innisfail.

### **The Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority**

QRAA is a major provider of recovery assistance in the NDRA process in the form of concessional loans. QRAA's presence in the region was bolstered with the location of five officers in the region to assist with the development of applications for cyclone recovery loans.

It was recognised that because of the severe impact of Cyclone Larry, standard NDRA loans would require considerable enhancement. Suitable modifications were announced by the Prime Minister and operational by mid April. QRAA also moved to simplify the application process for these enhanced loans, developing an application kit and using a reduced application form. QRAA also reduced the processing time for applications to less than twenty days. The current approval rate of Cyclone Larry enhanced loan applications is over eighty four percent.

<b>QRAA Cyclones Larry &amp; Monica NDRA applications processed to 16 February 2007</b>				
	Approved	Declined	Approval amount	Average approval
Primary Producers	452	60	\$92,218,694	\$204,024
Small Business	113	47	\$17,303,953	\$153,132
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>\$109,522,647</b>	<b>\$193,845</b>

### **Industry Action Groups/Industry Action Plans**

Soon after the cyclone, it was recognised that the recovery phase for primary production within the affected area would take years to complete and well beyond the completion of repairs to buildings and essential services.

Accordingly, General Cosgrove asked the DPI&F to coordinate Operation Recovery - Industry Action Groups (ORIAG) consisting of eleven Industry Action Groups, comprising representatives from major primary industry sectors. Each group was to develop an Industry Action Plan for cyclone recovery. These plans listed more than fifty



recommendations which were submitted to the Queensland Government. Most of the proposals were adopted and four Industry Development Officers were appointed to work with the industries in the Wet Tropics and the Atherton Tablelands to assist in the delivery of the recommendations. Regular projects and activities have also been modified to accommodate the proposals in the Industry Recovery Plans. The Industry Action Groups will continue to monitor the recovery effort and implementation of these strategies, with administrative support from the DPI&F.

An example of the recommendations of the Industry Action Plan process drew on past experience of Cyclone Winifred in 1988 to identify a potential problem in the banana industry with a resulting glut in the market caused by the majority of banana plantations returned to full production at the same time. The banana Industry Action Group, working with DPI&F developed a proposal to stagger the recovery of banana plantations through selectively "nurse-suckering" a portion of the crop. Approximately 30 percent of the plantations were nurse-suckered, and as the industry returned to full production in January 2007, only a slight oversupply occurred and carton prices remained relatively close to the cost of production around \$15 to \$18 per carton.

### NDRA freight subsidies

A standard program offered to primary producers following natural disasters is the NDRA freight subsidy program, which provides up to \$5000 in subsidies for emergency shipments of fodder, water and materials. The dairy industry has been particularly active in accessing this assistance.

Uptake of NDRA freight subsidies to 12 February 2007		
	Dairy industry	Total primary industry freight subsidies
No. claims	50	113
Average value of subsidy	\$3,368	\$1,727
Number at \$5000 maximum	18	18
<b>Total value of subsidies</b>	<b>\$168,386</b>	<b>\$195,100</b>

Average non-dairy producer claim is \$424.

### Operation Farm Clear

Operation Farm Clear (OFC) has become one of the successful programs of the cyclone recovery effort. More than 1000 farms are expected to be cleared by the end of the project. OFC is a partnership between all levels of government and industry, with DPI&F as lead agency. It assisted primary producers to clear vegetation and other debris from properties and re-establish fences. Wandering stock posed a risk to human safety and animal welfare and the amount of debris on farms meant that many primary producers would take years to cleanup and get back to full production without assistance.

The project also provided employment and training for farm workers displaced by the cyclone and the local unemployed. More than 200 people were employed in OFC with 197 through the Community Jobs Plan project. They received training necessary to undertake this work and were also offered a range of further elective training. Many displaced workers have now returned to work in primary industries with new skills and experience while others who had been long term unemployed have gained new skills and rejoined the workforce.

<b>Operation Farm Clear - Farms completed by industry 2 February 2007</b>	
Banana industry	125
Beef industry	306
Dairy industry	70
Fisheries	10
Forestry	65
Pork and Poultry	1
Other horticulture	33
Sugar Cane	193
Tree horticulture	98
Other	61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>962</b>

OFC has largely wound up its activities, although some final clearing activities and forestry work is likely to continue through until the end of June 2007. Up to \$10 million in funding was allocated from NDRA and \$2 million from the Department of Employment and Training for the Community Jobs Plan project.

### **Gulf Country/Cape York**

DPI&F PICRAS provided assistance to producers following the impact of severe flooding from Cyclone Larry in the Gulf and the passage of Cyclone Monica over Cape York. Major issues to be addressed included animal welfare, the prolonged lack of access due to roads cut for up to two months, and husbandry difficulties of mustering, weaning, disease vaccination and parasite control.

DPI&F and QRAA consulted closely with industry representatives and local producers leading to the extension of enhanced NDRA measures to assist producers in these areas.

### **Waterway debris working party**

In June 2006 General Cosgrove asked DPI&F to examine the problem of waterway debris throughout the impacted region. Chaired by the Director-General, DPI&F, a working party of relevant stakeholders and government agencies was organised developing a risk assessment methodology and identified high priority locations where waterway debris could be a problem in future wet seasons. The working party also identified the legal and operational constraints that would apply to work undertaken in waterways. The working party recommended that the Department of Natural Resources and Water (DNRW) was best placed to undertake and authorise clearing activity in waterways, and responsibility for the program was transferred to DNRW in August 2006.

### **ICA and plant health inspection service fee waiver**

To ease the financial strain on horticultural producers and to ensure these producers were able to resume marketing when produce was again available, all the usual Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) auditing and Interstate Plant Quarantine inspection fees were waived until 31 December 2007. This initiative in negating fees has saved North Queensland producers over \$128,000 during 2006/07.

## The way ahead

## Industry Development Officers

Industry Recovery Action Plans describe some of the critical requirements and significant issues for the region's industries to recover and grow. The Industry Action Groups will continue to operate as required by industry, and DPI&F has committed to provide the administrative support for these groups. A key factor identified in the Plans is the provision of additional Industry Development Officers and extension services through DPI&F.

DPI&F is employing additional Industry Development Officers at South Johnstone and Mareeba, and two additional extension officers at Kairi and Mareeba to support new and existing projects in dairy and tropical tree fruits. These locations and activities have been chosen in consultation with industry for impact on recovery, resilience and growth. The work plans will be broadened as further consultation takes place and new issues and opportunities emerge.

## Lessons learnt from Larry

Representatives from the department worked with industry and other key government stakeholders to determine lessons learnt. The group identified a range of issues that were common to all in relation to responding to an emergency. Future actions for the department include working with industry and other government agencies to:

- enhance the Department's response linkages across government and industry
- develop a more effective communication system which notifies industry and other key stakeholders during an emergency (Australian Notification System)
- include external forums such as Dialogue for Action as part of the immediate response strategy
- identify and train departmental officers who will maintain a key role in emergency response and recovery
- link the role of Industry Recovery Officers to DPI&F response and recovery capability
- assist primary producers to better manage (identify and monitor) their risks
- integrate Industry Recovery Plans into the State's disaster management arrangements (ensuring alignment with the recommendations resulting from the review of the State's Disaster Management Arrangements).

### **Farm financial counsellors**

There are ongoing recovery issues of a financial nature for both individual enterprises and for separate industries. The tree crop industry with its long term recovery time frame is a specific industry which may require significant assistance.

The opportunity for producers to access NDRA loans does not close till December 2007. It is anticipated that there will be steady stream of clients seeking assistance with these applications. Assistance to producers carrying out annual reviews of NDRA loans may also impact on demand.

An additional FFC was appointed to the cyclone area in November 2006. The position has been strategically based at South Johnstone Research Station which allows the officer to assist the resident FFC and to also assist the Mareeba FFC in servicing the Southern side of the Atherton Tablelands.

### **Labour Skilling Strategy**

On Monday 12 February 2007 on the Atherton Tablelands, the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Honourable Tim Mulherin MP launched a new online tool that will identify what training is needed, not only for the Cyclone Larry ravaged areas but across Queensland. The Skills Telegraph is an innovative web-based database that will collect information on training and skilling needs to target investment in training. The information gathered will be used by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts in the development of priority skilling and training for delivery by registered training organisations. The intention is to assist industry attract, retain, develop and access a skilled workforce.

### **Banana labour summit**

A consequence of the lost banana production for a nine month period since the cyclone has been the exodus of labour from the banana industry either into other local jobs or out of the district altogether. A Banana labour summit was held in January 2007 to formulate a response to the problems associated with the lack of available labour to harvest the new crop. Industry, labour and skilling networks were involved in a Dialogue for Action forum which has resulted in the placement of a co-ordinator in the district (funded by DET) to assist industry to access the available labour which is currently registered with the network. The Australian Agricultural College Corporation has programs to assist the up-skilling of the labour force to become successfully employed.

The offer of up to 100 volunteers from the Yarrabah Aboriginal Community has been a welcome result from the meeting.

# Department of Public Works

## Role within the Queensland Disaster Management System

Under the auspices of the State Disaster Management Plan the Department of Public Works has functional support agency responsibility for Building & Engineering, Emergency Supply and Communications.

Due to its comprehensive regional networks, QBuild, the Department's maintenance and construction arm, coordinates the delivery of these functional support agency responsibilities on behalf of the Department. QBuild is supported by other units within the Department including: Project Services, Queensland Government Accommodation Office, Queensland Government Chief Information Office, CITEC, Queensland Purchasing, SDS and QFleet.

The Department of Public Works, including its commercialised business units, maintains a level of preparedness to support Queensland's disaster management system and other State Government departments or agencies.

### **Pre-impact response**

In the days and hours prior to landfall of Tropical Cyclone (TC) Larry, the Department of Public Works was actively involved in a number of planning activities at both State and District Disaster Coordination Group level. These planning activities generally included:

#### ***Establishment of Disaster Coordination Centres***

The QBuild Regional Office located in Grove Street, Cairns was activated, which involved: preparations for connection to emergency power; communication system checks; staff placed on standby; emergency response material and equipment checks as well as the deployment of liaison officers to District Disaster Coordination Centres in Cairns, Mareeba and Innisfail. QBuild's Burdekin Region in Townsville was also requested to activate, while all other QBuild Regional Offices were placed on standby. The Department's functional coordinator was deployed to the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Brisbane.

#### ***Planning for community evacuations***

Preliminary advice from the Bureau of Meteorology indicated the impact of a potentially severe Category 5 tropical cyclone with destructive wind gusts of 300Km/hr and an accompanying storm tide. Discussions at both State and District Disaster level were focussed on the risk posed to low lying coastal communities, how community evacuations might be managed and where evacuees could be directed. The lack of suitable public cyclone shelter accommodation within the projected impact area intensified the need for protracted discussions and risk analysis. (A Public Cyclone Shelter is defined as "a building or part of a building that is designed and constructed to protect a group of people from high winds, windborne debris and storm tide during a severe tropical cyclone").

### ***Development of risk profiles***

The State Disaster Coordination Group discussed potential impacts to built infrastructure, services and industry as well as a means to maintain a heightened response capability for forward deployment as soon as practicable after the threat caused by the cyclone had receded.

### ***Upscaling of emergency response capability***

QBuild commenced planning for the forward positioning and deployment of additional resources. Early on the morning of the impact of the cyclone, a damage assessment team consisting of senior personnel left QBuild's Burdekin Regional Office (Townsville) with instructions to stay clear of the impacted area until wind speeds had abated. Meanwhile, preparations were made for a number of other teams to be assembled for deployment by either road direct into the impact area or by air into Cairns. The focus of the separate teams would be to: support emergency response operations as directed by the respective District Disaster Management Group; commence damage assessments of impacted State Government built infrastructure; effect emergency repairs to government infrastructure; and commence development of long-term recovery of damaged public built assets.

### ***Immediate post-impact disaster response***

The Department of Public Works deployed its Disaster Recovery Coordinator to the local State Disaster Coordination Centre established in Cairns, following the impact of TC Larry. During the initial response phase, the Department of Public Works, through QBuild, was requested to provide a number of services in support of counter disaster operations, all while coordinating its normal core business of securing and mitigating damage to State Government built infrastructure. Some of the services requested as part of counter disaster operations included:

#### ***Supply of bottled water and food***

The broad scale loss of power supply to large tracts of north Queensland communities including Cairns, the Atherton Tablelands and Innisfail had an immediate impact through the loss of viable potable water supplies in some areas and the spoiling of foodstuffs within homes and stores. QBuild was tasked with providing an ongoing supply of bottled water and pre-prepared meals until the respective communities could become self sufficient with the reconnection of a viable water service and an ability to prepare their own meals. Upwards of 500,000 litres of bottled water would eventually be provided as part of counter disaster operations.

In the first 72 hours following the impact of TC Larry, a total of 12,000 prepared meals were provided by Caterair Airport Services. Many catering organisations based outside of Cairns assisted with the donation of meals including pizzas and other prepared foods. Upon its arrival in Innisfail, the Australian Defence Force provided its own catering as did many State Emergency Service Units, while community service organisations such as Rotary and Lions provided valuable contributions towards feeding the impacted community.

The Department of Public Works provided stockpiles of non-perishable foodstuffs and cooking equipment out of both Cairns and Townsville, while major retailers made their own arrangements in terms of repairs to infrastructure and re-supply of goods.

### ***Supply of earthmoving equipment and trucks***

The removal of debris was a major priority to facilitate safe travel around the impacted communities as well as to buoy sagging community spirits. The Department of Public Works assisted the Johnstone Shire Council by engaging the services of earthmoving equipment contractors and operators to assist with the removal of debris from roads and suburban streets.

The scale of building and foliage debris to be collected over the ensuing days and weeks would culminate in a variety of issues for the Johnstone Shire. Special consideration also had to be given in regard to the treatment of hazardous materials such as asbestos containing building products.

### ***Supply of tarpaulins, fuel and other ancillary supplies***

Ongoing heavy rainfall hindered the efforts of residents and volunteers making progress in effecting temporary repairs. Thousands of tarpaulins were shifted to the impacted areas to aid State Emergency Service and army personnel to effect temporary repairs. The loss of power also directly impeded the ability to make use of existing fuel reserves within impacted areas and as a consequence, in the initial stages, fuel stocks had to be road transported from Cairns.

The Department of Public Works assisted in the supply of additional reserves of tarpaulins as well as in the supply of fuel until generators could be sourced and connected to local fuel outlets.

## ***Supply of engineering and damage assessment services***

Aside from its own portfolio of built assets, the Department of Public Works was proactive in undertaking damage inspections and applying remedial works at a wide range of State Government built infrastructure including public housing, schools, hospitals and emergency service facilities etc. QBuild staff at its Cairns Regional Office, as well as personnel from its Innisfail and Atherton depots, emerged from their homes following the cyclone and set about coordinating repairs or mitigating further damage to government assets. QBuild officers like Mr Darren Spannagle and all other local QBuild regional office and depot personnel, deserve a special mention for their contribution to the recovery of the impacted communities.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service also deployed a contingent of specially trained officers who undertook inspections of damaged residences with a view to making recommendations on their structural integrity and fitness for continued use.

The Department of Public Works also worked towards identifying security issues at State Government facilities and worked towards either effecting building repairs or providing a static security presence by means of personnel organised through the Department's State Government Protective Security Service.

### ***Supply of emergency power generators and associated trades***

The broad scale loss of power and projected long term disruptions, particularly in some of the more remote rural communities across the Tablelands and some nearby coastal towns and resorts, posed a number of serious dilemmas for disaster managers and in particular the local dairy and aquaculture industries.

The Department of Public Works was tasked with sourcing and connecting generators to enable primary industry producers to recommence operations and subsequently avoid animal and industry losses. Generators were also sought and installed to maintain power at a range of Telstra Mobilenet communication facilities.

In the days following TC Larry, QBuild coordinated the provision of in excess of 120 generators. The generators were of varying sizes from small 4.0kva sets to large 120kva units and were supplied by hire equipment providers from across Queensland.

#### ***Deployment of temporary workforce and support arrangements***

Initial reports from the impacted area quickly identified the need for additional resources from a number of State Government agencies i.e. Communities, Health, Fire and Rescue Service, Emergency Management Queensland as well as Public Works. Most agencies organised their own staff air travel and accommodation arrangements, however, the Department of Public Works was requested to coordinate the provision of a vehicle fleet to facilitate transport around the impacted areas. To support the relief operation of TC Larry, QFleet responded by making 27 vehicles available immediately. By Friday 7 April 2006, 78 vehicles from QFleet's existing stock were successfully deployed in the affected area. Of these, nine vehicles were purchased at dealers in Cairns, due to heavy rainfall preventing QFleet moving stock from other regional depots. Once flood waters had cleared, a further two new four-wheel drive vehicle purchases were brought forward at dealerships in Mareeba and Innisfail as there were no suitable alternatives in QFleet's existing stock. In total, QFleet deployed 89 vehicles.

#### ***Short-term recovery***

Within the early days of the response, QBuild and Project Services were extensively involved in the inspection and restoration of a wide range of State Government built infrastructure such as heritage listed buildings and more than 150 schools which had been closed as a result of TC Larry.

#### ***Supply of building and damage assessment services***

Within one week, all but seven of the more severely damaged schools were able to be reopened. A concerted effort from the Department of Education, Training and the Arts and QBuild enabled repairs to be made and temporary classroom accommodation to be put in place, thus enabling the remaining schools to be reopened over the following ten days.

In addition to the reopening of the schools, QBuild was required to coordinate the inspection, completion of damage assessment reports and temporary repairs to in excess of 2500 State Government built assets including 2000 Department of Housing residences.

Department of Public Works office consumables and furniture provider SDS assisted the recovery effort through the provision of a range of new furniture and school supplies. The work undertaken by SDS was ultimately instrumental in the successful reopening of affected schools as well as a range of other government services. SDS provided enough furniture to fully equip 12 temporary classrooms, including 10 at the severely damaged Innisfail State High School, and all within seven days of the impact of TC Larry. During the ensuing months, SDS's regional Account Manager worked closely with Department of Education, Training and the Arts representatives to replace damaged furnishings at a total of 22 schools.

The Department of Public Works, through its major design and construction arms, Project Services and QBuild, quickly established a task force based in Cairns to coordinate reconstruction activity in the affected regions. Based on reports from QBuild field staff, the first phase of Project Services' role involved arranging engineering inspections of government buildings which sustained damage. The essential purpose of the initial inspections was to establish whether or not damaged buildings were safe to occupy. The second phase involved more detailed engineering inspections and reports, and the third phase involved the production of contract documents.

Project Services was also approached by Local Authorities with requests to inspect and provide condition reports for damaged buildings included on local shire heritage registers or other buildings of community significance in the affected areas.

As part of the Department's taskforce approach, a team of experienced QBuild officers was assembled and deployed into Cairns to supplement existing regional office personnel. The team was under the leadership of QBuild's Director, Northern Queensland Group and included works program managers, construction supervisors and procurement specialists. A large contingent of QBuild trade personnel, including carpenters, electricians, glaziers and roofing plumbers, was deployed to support local tradespersons in effecting the necessary repairs.

QBuild was also responsible for staffing a 1800 hotline which registered donations from businesses and the general public as well as offers of assistance from a range of trade services from across Australia.

#### ***Communication services***

The Office of Government ICT (now called the Queensland Government Chief Information Office) within the Department of Public Works supported whole-of-Government disaster recovery initiatives by working behind the scenes with the major communication providers to ensure that sufficient priority was placed on the restoration of services to all affected communities. Through direct liaison with communication providers, the Office of Government ICT was able to identify potential problems with power outages impacting on communication hubs throughout the impacted areas and arrangements were made for placement of emergency generators.

CITEC, a commercialised business unit of the Department of Public Works and the State Government's principal ICT provider, was also active in effecting key communication initiatives during the response to TC Larry. CITEC's Education Queensland's Facilities Management Office (EQFMO) coordinated the reconnection of network services and the replacement of equipment at more than 100 affected school sites. CITEC's EQFMO also provided assistance through the re-establishment of school phone and fax facilities at all affected Education Queensland facilities.

CITEC was directly responsible for the development and implementation of a service to enable the public to donate money via credit cards towards the Tropical Cyclone Larry Appeal. The service, which was ultimately available through two channels – the Internet and Interactive Voice Response (IVR), went live to the public on the evening of Friday 24 March 2006.

#### ***Operation Sunrise***

The Department of Public Works was requested to coordinate the tasking of 120 volunteer tradespeople who were assembled and deployed to Cairns for one week to assist with recovery work. The tasking and coordination of this major workforce was left to a small team of experienced QBuild officers. The primary focus of the Operation Sunrise workforce was the repair of private residential premises and particularly those which were uninsured. Although the Operation Sunrise team was only a small part of the overall Department of Public Works



*Assisting with emergency repairs to Innisfail High School.*

post disaster operations they were widely acclaimed as having played an integral part in the recovery effort.



*QBuild team assisting the recovery efforts.*

### ***Operation Recovery Management Group***

The Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) commenced after the closure of the Cairns State Disaster Coordination Group. Initial planning for the ORMG necessitated the identification of a suitable location close to General Cosgrove's Operation Recovery Task Force in Innisfail.

The Department of Public Works Government Accommodation Office was able to coordinate an accommodation solution with the assistance of the management of

Innisfail's Johnstone College of TAFE. Arrangements were also made for the provision of furniture, temporary data and phone services as well as a temporary upgrade to the site's power supply.

The Department of Public Works was originally represented on the ORMG by Manager, Disaster Management Services followed by the Regional Manager, QBuild Cape York Region.

### ***Assistance to Department of Communities***

QBuild worked closely with the Department of Communities in the inspection and assessment of privately owned residences whose owners were deemed eligible for assistance under Queensland's community hardship scheme. During the ensuing weeks and months a total of 677 private homes were inspected, with detailed reports provided back to the Department of Communities and in some instances to the Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal.

### ***Planning for the deployment of a Community Recovery Team***

The active construction industry across the State and particularly in Central and North Queensland even before the impact of TC Larry was always going to ensure a strained market for assembling any recovery workforce. A key consideration of the original Operation Recovery Task Force, and indeed its management group, was the establishment of a group which could best represent elements of both the construction and insurance industries. The Building Coordination Centre (BCC) was established and was supported when, and where required, by the Department of Public Works (QBuild). The BCC and the Department of Housing were instrumental in devising plans for the deployment of construction tradespeople to North Queensland to effect recovery works.

### ***Long-term recovery***

The significant level of damage to residential housing across North Queensland, the lack of a workforce to undertake remedial works, as well as the general lack of temporary accommodation of unhoused personnel let alone any subsequent workforce, were all problems that would need to be addressed as part of the long term recovery process.

### ***Temporary Accommodation Queensland Housing Tenants***

Meetings were held with the Department of Corrective Services to inspect transportable accommodation at the Wacol Prison. By 7 April 2006, approval had been granted for the

relocation of 43 transportable accommodation units and old residences from the West Brisbane Community Corrections Centre. The Department of Housing requested all buildings be cleaned and painted externally, prior to relocation. Sites were discussed and it was confirmed that temporary accommodation units would be relocated to addresses within the Innisfail area. QBuild arranged this transportation and facilitated the connection to services.

QBuild also coordinated the relocation of seven residences from Townsville with the assistance of the Department of Corrective Services. Delivery dates still remain outstanding for two units and it is anticipated that they will be completed by 30 June 2007.



*QBuild.*

#### ***Restoration of damaged State Government built infrastructure***

As at 9 February 2007, QBuild had coordinated a total of \$9.4 million in repairs to State Government built infrastructure damaged as a direct result of TC Larry.

While building damage was sustained to a broad range of Queensland Government assets, the most severely impacted agencies were the Department of Housing and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts.

The Department of Housing sustained damage to 1,146 properties with an estimated final repair cost of \$2.9 million. This included the demolition and reconstruction of various residences throughout the region. The Department of Education, Training and the Arts sustained damage to 91 schools and 41 residences, with a projected final repair cost of \$3.35 million.

The Innisfail State High School sustained the major proportion of damage with teaching Block C, which consisted of 10 teaching spaces including staff rooms and associated covered areas, totally destroyed. Extensive damage was also caused to Block B. The final rebuilding work at the Innisfail State High School has been completed.

#### **Outcomes for Public Works**

##### **General**

In the weeks and months following TC Larry, the Department of Public Works followed a process to review actions taken during the response to, and recovery from, the event with the view to identifying necessary changes to internal plans and/or procedures for future like events. The review process generally included post disaster debriefings at both management and operational levels, with all staff encouraged to participate. Some of the major learnings that were observed by the Department of Public Works, all as part of the internal review process included:

##### ***Infrastructure of Public Cyclone Shelters***

There is a designated need for an infrastructure of adequately designed public cyclone shelters to accommodate at-risk members of a community in preparation for the impact of a severe cyclone event. There also needs to be a review of existing public cyclone shelter design guidelines. All local authorities should review their cyclone and storm risk and quantify their respective community evacuation plans and/or public cyclone shelter requirements.

### **Cyclone damage to built infrastructure**

The amount of built infrastructure damage impacted by wind and any associated wind borne debris damage was originally stated as being in excess of 70%. Engineering and Bureau of Meteorological advice during the numerous post TC Larry reviews have indicated that the fast forward movement of the cyclone had a minimising affect on the damage sustained by the community. Had the cyclone crossed any slower, the ensuing debris storm may have increased markedly, thus significantly increasing infrastructure damage and injuries.

As expected, older buildings, particularly houses not built to current cyclone resistant requirements, sustained significant damage. Given the age, potential life expectancy of buildings and estimated cost to repair damage, Government Agencies were faced with major decisions regarding expenditure and obtaining best value for money. It is considered that this issue will reoccur with future cyclone damage to older buildings and a review into the problem based on a collaborative government approach, may be prudent.

### **Disaster response team**

A need exists for the establishment and upskilling of a specialist team of Department of Public Works personnel which can be deployed into an impact zone to manage the initial disaster response and ongoing recovery operations.

### **Disaster resource management arrangements**

The complications associated with the provision and ongoing management of resources during the initial stages of the response to TC Larry have indicated a need for the development of a trained whole-of-Government team and procedures for use in future events.

### **Skilled and equipped workforce**

The response provided by Department of Public Works personnel was generally considered first rate, but their efforts and the ensuing lessons learnt can only be maintained by an ongoing regime of internal training and exercising.

## **The way ahead**

A special review group chaired by the Department of Public Works and consisting of specialists from a number of fields (i.e. representatives from a number of State Government agencies; Australian Government agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, Geo-science Australia, Emergency Management Australia; Australian Building Codes Board, Standards Australia and the James Cook University – Cyclone Testing Station), was assembled to review the suitability of the current design guidelines for Public Cyclone Shelters. A number of recommendations were made by the review group for revisions to the current Public Cyclone Shelter design guidelines. The new revised guidelines are currently in their final draft and will be made available in due course.

The Department of Public Works has recommended the upgrading of the design of a range of new buildings (such as auditoriums, halls and gymnasiums) in cyclone impacted regions based on the design guidelines for public cyclone shelters. Not all new buildings will be suitable for use as cyclone shelters. Any provision of the necessary shelter building capacity across all cyclone impacted regions of Queensland would be a long-term proposal.

The Department of Public Works has proposed the development of a State Disaster Management Planning Guideline to "Mitigate the Adverse Impact of Cyclones" on existing and developing communities. The State Disaster Management Group endorsed the development of the guideline on 18 September 2006.

The guideline will define a planning process which identifies:

- community vulnerability to cyclones (e.g. quantifies community vulnerability to storm tide or structure failure including evacuation routes and vulnerability to flooding or landslip)
- strategies including infrastructure development to reduce the vulnerability (e.g. construction of evacuation routes or cyclone shelters)
- development of recommended standards for evacuation routes
- implementation strategies.

The Department of Public Works has commenced work with the Cairns City Council to develop and trial the planning process.

Plans have been developed for the structure of a self-sufficient emergency response team of personnel who can be placed on standby and deployed into an impact zone immediately it is safe to go forward. The team will consist of senior managers, procurement specialists and other team leaders who will be able to coordinate the delivery of services to expedite the restoration of government services and provide support to other agencies.

Planning has commenced for the development of a series of strategies for the better management of resources and materials that would need to be deployed into an impact zone in support of disaster response and community recovery activities. This will enable the secure storage and monitoring of ongoing need for bottled water, tarpaulins, generators, food etc to be accurately quantified and deployed as the need arises.

Since TC Larry, a range of new training initiatives have been developed for personnel in the Department of Public Works, particularly QBuild, and a number of enhancements to existing resources for the repair of damaged built infrastructure have been put in place.

# Department of State Development

## Cyclone relief

### Role

The Department of State Development's overarching role in recovery is to support business, industry and regions to achieve economic recovery, and to improve resilience.

### Introduction

The Department of State Development is not a functional lead agency in the Queensland Disaster Management system, but is a support agency involved under the 'all hazards, all agencies' holistic recovery approach.

### Pre-event

The Department went on alert and activated the Internal Disaster Management Group (IDMG) to support and coordinate the Department's activities in response to the cyclone alert. The Department's Client Services unit liaised with the regional offices located in Cairns and Townsville and regional staff implemented the Cyclone Plan preparations for the office.

Departmental representatives attended meetings and teleconferences of the State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) and the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG). Regularly updated information from these groups was disseminated to the IDMG to inform response and recovery planning.

### Immediate response

Within 24 hours of the cyclone striking, Call Centre and Online Services (now Business Information Services), had established a telephone hotline and a web page. The web page was accessible via the Department's SmartSite and Smart Small Business websites, providing information and referrals for those affected by the cyclone. Staff in Online Services liaised with other agencies to maintain currency of information. The Business Hotline and website recorded a total of 2,989 client contacts, post-cyclone.

Regional staff commenced investigating impact through local networks. Brisbane Client Services responded to State Development Centre (SDC) needs to support operational activities. Information from the SDMG and SDCG was disseminated through the Department's internal group, and to the Director-General and Ministers.

### Early recovery activities

The Department focused on individual client assistance for business owners. Officers from SDCs in Cairns and Townsville attended the interdepartmental one-stop-shops in Innisfail, Babinda, Tully and Atherton until mid April 2006, providing one-on-one client consultations. Staff helped clients with application forms for assistance and referred clients to other agencies, where appropriate. Client referrals from the State Development Hotline were also followed up. By 30 June 2006, SDC staff had assisted 577 businesses making applications for financial assistance and handled 495 other requests for assistance.

In Brisbane, the IDMG held teleconferences to support information flow and to coordinate the Department's response to resource needs and issues in the region. To inform recovery planning, a regional profile and impact report was compiled with assistance from the Office of Economic and Statistical Research and the Department's Strategic Policy unit.

### Participation in whole-of-government recovery

The Task Force established the Operational Recovery Management Group (ORMG) in Innisfail to coordinate the delivery of recovery management arrangements. An officer from the SDC Cairns has been a member of the ORMG. Membership of the Group has provided an opportunity to deal with inter-agency issues and raise the specific recovery issues and needs faced by business and industry.

## Cyclone recovery

### Role

The Department of State Development has three main roles in supporting recovery.

- assist business and industry to meet short term recovery needs
- assist business and industry to build medium and long term economic renewal and resilience
- assist workers retrenched as a result of Cyclone Larry with re-entry into the workforce, in partnership with the former Department of Employment and Training.

The Department focused recovery efforts at three levels:

- individual business recovery
- sectoral recovery for secondary and tertiary industries
- facilitation of long term economic recovery, renewal and resilience.

### Introduction

The economic profile of the area affected by Cyclone Larry has influenced the progress of recovery. The regional economy is based primarily on primary production and tourism, as well as local service sectors. Tourism and primary production suffered considerable impact from the cyclone, with the subsequent flow-on effects throughout the small business community across the affected region.

Additional influences on the recovery process, linked to the economic profile, include the high proportion of casual, part-time and seasonal employees and the large percentage of small to medium business enterprises, many of which were linked to Tourism and Agriculture.

Early impacts in the local economy were increased pressure on debt levels, and labour force and skill shortages. Individual businesses suffered loss or damage to premises, equipment and stock, increased debt, loss of labour force, suppliers and market. Many experienced temporary closure and reduced operations. However, as communities recovered, the injection of government assistance has made certain sectors of the economy relatively buoyant within a short time. Some industry sectors experienced strong demand, including the building and construction industry, wholesale and retail building supplies and hardware, accommodation and hospitality services in some locations.

## **Recovery planning assistance**

At the individual business level, there were already a number of programs from other agencies to support business recovery. To complement these programs and support business recovery planning and medium to long-term recovery actions, the Department developed a specific assistance program, based on its Regional Business Development Scheme. Two million dollars was set aside for implementation of this program.

The new program, the Cyclone Larry Special, was designed to assist medium and long term business recovery and to support regional economic recovery initiatives through regional and industry stakeholder groups such as regional economic development organisations, tourism groups and other business organisations. The program became operational in May 2006.

The program was a two-staged process. Stage 1 provided funds of up to \$10,000 for business recovery planning. Stage 2 provided funding support for significant projects and activities identified in the business recovery plans in stage 1. Local Governments, individual businesses, industry and regional development organisations could apply for funds to develop strategic regional and industry development projects and recovery planning. A dedicated team was established to process applications.

The Cyclone Larry Special has been extremely successful. As of February 2007, there were a total of 274 applications approved for the total of \$2,684,529 in assistance. As a result of the strong demand, new funding of \$2.7 million was made available through the mid year (2006) budget review. The program will conclude by June 2007, however some Stage 2 funded projects will have milestones that extend beyond this date.

## **Industry recovery**

The Industry Action Group was set up under the Task Force. The Group produced a comprehensive assessment of the impact of Cyclone Larry and identified and collated practical recovery strategies for devastated industries. It was jointly co-chaired by Mr Bruce Turner, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Department of State Development.

A number of industry working groups were established under the Industry Action Group, including a Secondary and Tertiary Industry Reference group set up by the Department of State Development through the SDC Cairns. This Group met in SDC Cairns on 4 May 2006 to raise issues and identify strategies and options for inclusion in an immediate and short-term industry recovery plan. Following consultation with the Group, the Department compiled a Secondary and Tertiary Industry Recovery Plan.

The draft plan was presented to the Secondary and Tertiary Industry Reference Group for review on 25 July 2006. Following adjustments to the plan from this consultation, the plan was finalised and an action plan implemented. Longer term projects identified in the plan were incorporated into the economic recovery and renewal strategy.

## **Assistance to displaced workers**

On 4 April 2006 the Premier announced an \$18.56 million assistance package for local unemployed residents to be delivered by the former Department of Employment and Training. The Worker Assistance Program formed part of this package. The Worker Assistance Program assists workers who lost their job as a result of Cyclone Larry, back into the workforce. Displaced workers are entitled to up to \$5,000 in assistance including job preparation assistance, training, and employer wage subsidy.

Towards the end of 2006 the Worker Assistance program transferred to the Department of State Development. The Worker Assistance Program has assisted 101 workers affected by Cyclone Larry to re-enter the workforce.

### Place-based support

The department is providing place-based support through its Business Retention and Expansion program at a cost of \$11,000 GST inclusive. Pre-cyclone, Innisfail had commenced a Business Retention and Expansion program. Cyclone Larry and its aftermath significantly altered the Innisfail economic landscape. A new contract is re-surveying Innisfail businesses originally surveyed in 2005, providing post-cyclone baseline data. The Innisfail community can then develop projects to retain and expand businesses in the light of contemporary circumstances. The Update project provides an opportunity for comparison with previous data to measure the economic impacts of the cyclone. The Update project is expected to be completed by the end of April 2007.

### Long term business and economic recovery and renewal

The Task Force delegated the Department of State Development with responsibility for developing a mechanism to facilitate long-term economic recovery for the affected region. The Department designed the Industry Strategic Directions process which supports a partnership approach between the Government and business community to maximise a coordinated recovery effort. The strategy contains two broad themes of 'Building the Future Economy and Improving Mitigation and Preparedness' and is based on the five principles of:

- effective partnerships
- self-reliance
- adaptability and responsiveness
- good governance
- resilient renewal

The strategy created a framework to:

- access the experience of established groups and support their recovery activities
- build on existing plans and strategies to address issues and opportunities arising from the impact of the cyclone
- capture other opportunities, strategies and options that support recovery and lead to longer term sustainability
- gather information on issues and impediments to recovery
- ensure stakeholder ownership of and commitment to the resulting actions.

### Consultation with community

Central to the development of the recovery and renewal strategy has been stakeholder consultation and involvement in constructing their own recovery strategy. Consultation commenced with a Forum in Cairns on 19 April 2006. The Forum provided a focal point for business and economic development organisations to raise issues and opportunities and provide information regarding current efforts at recovery.

Consultation continued with a series of one-on-one meetings with local Governments, industry associations, regional development organisations, and other peak business bodies. These meetings discussed economic development objectives, the impact of the cyclone, recovery actions, and the potential for collaboration. On the basis of these consultations, a draft strategy was developed to guide the recovery and renewal efforts of regional stakeholders.

### **Finalisation and implementation**

Senior officers met with the Operation Recovery Management Group in Innisfail on 19 July 2006 to discuss the draft Strategy. Industry and regional stakeholder groups then discussed the draft at an Economic Development Forum held in September 2006. The completed strategy was forwarded to the Operation Recovery Task Force and then endorsed by the Government on 4 December 2006. Its release was announced at the Cyclone Summit held in Cairns on 7 and 8 December 2006.

### **Strategy content**

The Strategy contains 87 activities, identified in partnership with local stakeholders, which are intended to renew and stimulate existing industries, explore the potential of new growth sectors and attract new investment to the area. The scope and scale of stakeholder action includes direct service delivery, policy development, information gathering, coordination and facilitation, funding and supporting the initiatives being undertaken by other stakeholders. 38 projects were well under way by February 2007 covering areas such as economic development planning, industry development, skill shortages, investment attraction and infrastructure.

### **Prevention and preparedness**

The cyclone has demonstrated the relative lack of effective risk management across the region and across industry sectors, and highlighted the need for improved preparedness. In response to this, the Department developed an on-line tool for business – the 'Natural Disaster Resilience Plan' which assists businesses to develop and identify risks and develop resilience plans.

At the regional level, the SDC Cairns arranged for a series of free Risk Management workshops to be run throughout the region. The workshops covered how to prepare for challenges and risks and how to create strategies to manage and reduce potential risks a business may face from a natural disaster such as Cyclone Larry. The workshops were run from early November to early December and targeted businesses in Innisfail, Cairns, Atherton, Kurrimine Beach, Tully, Mission Beach and Mareeba. They attracted 101 attendees.

### **Milestones and achievements**

The Department has been successful in assisting individual businesses, supporting secondary and tertiary industry recovery and providing a framework for the business, industry and regional stakeholders to drive their own economic recovery and renewal. Achievements include:

- Assistance to 274 businesses and a range of business organisations, local government and business and regional development organisations through the Cyclone Larry Special.
- The development and implementation of a Secondary and Tertiary Industry Recovery Plan to overcome immediate and short-term impediments to recovery.

- The development and implementation of a long-term Strategic Directions Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy for the cyclone affected region, which was announced at the Cyclone Summit on 8 December 2006. As of February 2007, 38 projects were underway.
- The funding of a re-survey for the Business Retention and Expansion program previously undertaken for Innisfail, pre-cyclone. The purpose is to assist the development of strategies and action plans relevant to current circumstances to encourage long-term economic growth, business expansion and the generation of new jobs.
- Facilitating a series of Risk Management workshops in the Cyclone Larry affected region designed to help businesses prepare for natural disasters.
- The production of a Natural Disaster Resilience Plan for business operators, which was launched at the Cyclone Summit on 8 December 2006.

### **Examples of strategic regional recovery projects**

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council received Stage 2 funding to undertake a review of products and services across the region with a view to coordinating and integrating these more effectively.

Tableland Futures Corporation was successful in gaining a Stage 2 grant from the *RBDS: Cyclone Larry Special* program from the Queensland Government. The grant, valued at \$49,600, will fund an Economic Profile and Investment Attraction Study for the Tablelands region. It is expected the grant will help in revitalising and diversifying the economy of the Atherton Tablelands, which was badly affected by Cyclone Larry.

## **Learning from Larry**

During response and recovery activities and following debriefings in head office and in the region, the Department compiled a comprehensive list of recommendations to improve disaster management within the agency and amongst external stakeholders. These are summarised below and are grouped in accordance with the four phases of disaster management.

### **Prevention**

#### ***Internal – DSD's own procedures***

- review and enhance DSD's disaster management system
- strengthen use of data, statistics and other relevant information to inform prevention planning and activities.

#### ***External – DSD's business and industry clients and regional responsibility***

- promote risk management and business continuity planning
- encourage stakeholders to investigate regional and industry vulnerabilities and undertake mitigation planning.

#### ***External – Whole-of-government disaster management and other agency linkages***

- establish effective cross-agency protocols to reduce duplication, support information sharing and reduce complexity of operations.

## Preparedness

### ***Internal – DSD's own procedures***

- undertake pre-season checks and updates
- undertake regular desktop exercises for system improvement.

### ***External – DSD's business and industry clients and regional responsibility***

- promote risk management, preparedness and business continuity planning.

### ***External – Whole-of-government disaster management and other agency linkages***

- coordinate regional prevention and preparedness activities of different agencies
- develop a multi-agency tool/database for client information collection
- develop a single brochure outlining all government assistance programs.

## Response

### ***Internal – DSD's own procedures***

- further develop systems and contacts to rapidly access data and information
- refine communication systems and protocols.

### ***External – DSD's client and regional responsibility***

- develop tools and channels to improve promotion of DSD's client support activities.

### ***External – Whole-of-government disaster management and other agency linkages***

- formalise DSD involvement in local disaster management response activities
- improve information sharing capability amongst government agencies
- review assistance programs across government
- develop a clear referral and follow-up-of referrals process across agencies
- provide one Whole-of-government hotline (not nine).

## Recovery

### ***Internal – DSD's own procedures***

- explore methodologies to assess effectiveness of support
- review and enhance recovery framework.

### ***External – DSD's client and regional responsibility***

- undertake resource planning to deliver services throughout all phases of recovery
- develop exit strategy
- evaluate funding assistance program.

### ***External – Whole-of-government disaster management and other agency linkages***

- formalise the Whole-of-government recovery process using the Task Force approach
- evaluate holistic recovery process to improve integration of agency recovery activities. Develop protocols between agencies involved in collaborative or linked recovery initiatives.

## The way ahead

The recovery process will continue for some time and is dependent upon many external factors over which business and industry have little control, for example other climatic impacts and external factors that affect business generally. With the dissolution of the ORMG and recovery activities and initiatives being absorbed into member agencies' general activities, it will be important to maintain the linkages across agencies to ensure continued coordination and integration of government activities.

The importance of community ownership of their recovery has been well documented and has underpinned the Department's design of the long-term economic recovery and renewal strategy. The strategy has been developed as a flexible and living document so that projects can be removed if no longer viable or relevant, adjusted or replaced by new initiatives. This process is flexible to suit changing needs and opportunities through recovery and enables the community to gradually move on from the strategy to developing new activities as part of the normal pattern of economic growth and development.

The department is monitoring the strategy's implementation. Staff in both Head Office and Cairns SDC will be liaising with stakeholders on the progress of projects. A report on the progress of the implementation of the strategy will be provided to Cabinet in June 2007.

Individual businesses who have undertaken business recovery planning will be implementing their plans, and a number of these are expected to seek assistance from SDCs to access the department's suite of products and services, for example the Queensland Industry Development Scheme, the Regional Business Development Scheme, investment attraction programs, access to production improvement expertise and management skill development.

In a continued effort to support improved resilience, risk management, business continuity and resilience planning will continue to be promoted to business and industry supported by on-line tools such as the Natural Disaster Resilience Kit.

### Evaluation and review

DSD has engaged the Office of Economic and Statistical Research to compile a current profile of the affected region, for comparison with the pre-cyclone profile. This is expected to contribute to a greater understanding of impact.

DSD also proposes to contact individual businesses and regional stakeholders for feedback regarding projects and activities they have undertaken with support from the Department, in order to evaluate the assistance provided. Information from this evaluation process will be used to inform recovery planning and frameworks for the future.

### Enhance Department of State Development's disaster management system

The department will be reviewing and improving its disaster management system, based on the learnings from Larry. The changes will also reflect changes within the whole-of-government disaster management practices, relevant to the department, that are to be implemented as part of overall system improvement.

# Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development



*Eco tourism was also affected after many national parks were closed whilst undergoing restoration.*

## Cyclone relief

The role of the Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development (DTFTWID) is to foster a fair and dynamic marketplace and encourage responsible practices and sustainable growth in the tourism, wine, liquor and hospitality industries in Queensland.

In the two weeks following Cyclone Larry, DTFTWID provided two staff members to assist in relief operations.

These staff members worked with the Department of Communities to provide support to the Community Disaster Management Committee and administrative support to process relief payments for residents.

In addition the department's statutory body, Tourism Queensland, immediately established a Crisis Response Group and activated the Tourism Crisis Management Plan and subordinate Cyclone Disaster Management Plan.

## Cyclone recovery

### Office of Fair Trading supports the business community

During Operation Recovery DTFTWID provided vital subsidiary support to the business community in the cyclone affected areas. Staff visited businesses in the affected areas immediately after the cyclone and provided the following services:

- assisted traders to test and recalibrate weighing and measuring instruments in their businesses
- assisted traders to provide information to consumers regarding food shortages, pricing increases and increased freight charges
- provided advice to consumers in relation to concerns about profiteering and unfair trading practices.

The visitation program was critical in reassuring the community that fair trading and profiteering issues were being effectively monitored and addressed.

Other activities undertaken by DTFTWID for Operation Recovery included:

- establishing a 24 hour hotline for consumer complaints
- waiving or discounting a range of fair trading and liquor licensing fees and charges

- relaxing liquor licensing requirements in certain circumstances (for example, some interim trading authorities were established to allow trading to continue while licensed premises were being repaired)
- working with Queensland Building Services Authority and Queensland Transport to monitor rebuilding activities associated with the department's portfolio
- conducting promotional activities emphasising good business practices with organisations such as the Real Estate Institute of Queensland and Motor Traders Association of Queensland
- participating in whole-of-Government Community Recovery Committee meetings.

### **Tourism Queensland supports regional tourism operators**

Tourism Queensland, in partnership with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council worked with local government and non-government organisations to initiate a number of tourism-related responses which are detailed below.

#### ***Communication/public relations:***

- A media response was developed by Tourism Queensland, the regional tourism organisations and key industry bodies and disseminated to the media, tourism operators and the community
- Tourism Queensland assisted in developing key messages for the media and other stakeholders that focused on the region being 'open for business', while being sensitive to the needs of affected operators and the relief efforts
- Positive stories about unaffected or 'open for business' operators were identified and provided to the media.

#### ***Industry assistance:***

- Tourism Queensland worked with the Department of State Development to develop and review business and recovery strategies for tourism operators and the wider community. Tourism Queensland also promoted support programs to operators and assisted the Department of State Development to address any concerns raised by tourism operators regarding the suitability, timing and accessibility of these programs
- Tourism operators were regularly updated about the availability of business and economic recovery programs through Tourism on Q bulletin editions
- Assistance was provided to the Queensland Tourism Industry Council to identify and assist severely affected operators.

#### ***Tourism product and infrastructure:***

- Tourism Queensland assisted the Post Cyclone Larry National Parks Taskforce to identify and address issues within national parks and tourist areas
- Tourism Queensland worked with the Department of Main Roads to restore road signs in affected areas.

#### ***Research and data collection:***

- Information provided by tourism organisations and operators was used to model scenarios on the estimated effect of Cyclone Larry on Northern Queensland regions.

### **Marketing:**

- Tourism organisations assisted in the development of Marketing Response Plans for the Townsville and Tourism Tropical North Queensland regions
- The plans supported the marketing objectives of the Cyclone Larry Tourism Recovery Action Plan, with the clear objective to rebuild the region's reputation and attract visitors back to the region
- The Marketing Response Plans aimed to drive new tourism business, to encourage pre-booked visitors to maintain their bookings for the region and to assuage the perception that the entire North Queensland region had been affected by the Cyclone
- Tourism Queensland funded the following marketing response activities:
  - television commercials appearing in Cairns and Townsville. This activity aimed to encourage locals to maintain their visits to the areas of Mission Beach and Cairns Highlands (Atherton Tablelands) which provide vital contributions to the local economy. *Project cost: \$11,000*
  - contribution to the development of a regional brochure, Explore The Great Green Way, for Innisfail, Tully, Mission Beach and Cardwell.  
*Project cost: \$70,000*
  - a consultant to visit Mission Beach to advise operators on re-packaging their product. *Project cost: \$5,000*
  - employment of a motivational speaker to visit Mission Beach (Tom O'Toole, The Beechworth Baker). *Project cost: \$8,000*
  - television and radio campaigns for the Cairns Highlands. *Project cost: \$18,000*
  - a newspaper advertising package for the Cairns Highlands. *Project cost: \$4,000*
  - a map poster for Cairns Highlands. *Project cost: \$3,000*
  - a consultant to develop packaging for the Cairns Highlands operators.  
*Project cost: \$5,000*
  - a television commercial to promote operators in Townsville who had been affected by the Cyclone. *Project cost: \$20,000*
  - a cooperative campaign with Sunlover Holidays and Tourism Australia. The campaign, which included television, print media and on-line advertising, was designed to target Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane markets.  
*Project cost: \$250,000 (total project was in excess of \$750,000)*



## **Wine Industry Development Division supports fruit wine industry**

The far northern fruit wineries, although a small component of the Queensland wine industry, are an important emerging niche sector, producing boutique wines for domestic and export consumption.

Following the devastating impact of Cyclone Larry, Wine Industry Development Officers immediately contacted two tropical fruit wine producers – Paradise Wines at Mission Beach (operated by Mary Lankester) and Murdering Point Winery at Silkwood (operated by the Berryman family).

These wineries were directly in the path of the cyclone. Officers spoke with the operators on a number of occasions following the cyclone to offer support and discuss any forms of assistance required.

Despite the severe wind and rain damage suffered by Murdering Point Winery and Paradise Wines during Cyclone Larry, both wineries are now back to full operating capacity. In fact, Murdering Point Winery was the first winery in the region to re-commence cellar door operations shortly after the cyclone and was the recipient of the Best Tourism Winery Award at the 2006 Queensland Tourism Awards.

## **The way ahead**

The department will continue to review, evaluate and improve the Tourism Crisis Management Plan and other industry disaster recovery support mechanisms.



*Eco tourism was also affected after many national parks were closed whilst undergoing restoration.*

# Environmental Protection Agency (including the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service)

## Cyclone relief

The following statements relate specifically to the critical incident management phase which approximately equated to the first two weeks immediately following landfall.

### Specific critical incident phase outcomes

- Storm Tide advisors were deployed to the State Disaster Coordination Centre during the threat of Tropical Cyclone Larry to assist in assessing the potential impacts on coastal communities from ocean flooding by a storm tide. Storm tide advisors were deployed in response to the activation of the Storm Tide Warning Response System.
- Under the direction of State Emergency Service and the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) provided logistical and operational assistance with the initial emergency relief effort. Up to 100 QPWS rangers in 25 crews from across the State (plus vehicles and emergency equipment) were made available for community assistance. Most of these crews were involved in providing emergency access and housing repair work.
- The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Operations Division allocated a staff member and vehicle to Queensland Health in Innisfail to provide advice on waste management and sewage environmental health matters.
- The EPA provided for the establishment and monitoring of un-licensed emergency waste disposal sites to meet emergency debris disposal requirements, but without compromise to environmental values. Other industry post-cyclone licensing and permit requirements were identified to facilitate a speedy approval processes particularly in relation to Environmental Protection Act licensing. EPA staff liaised with aquaculture, sugar mill and sewage treatment plant operators and visited key affected industrial sites to check on their status and to provide advice and direction to operators.

### EPA approach to critical incident management

- A critical incident management group was formed from the QPWS Northern Regional Management Team and held its initial meeting at 9.30am on 21 March 2006. The group met daily until April 3 and then every 2-3 days until mid April 2006 as the agency moved into 'recovery phase'.
- A hierarchy of priorities was established at the initial critical incident management meeting as follows:
  1. checking that all EPA/QPWS staff and their families were safe and well
  2. restoring operational bases to full functionality
  3. providing the community with urgent assistance as directed by the SES
  4. restoring on-park visitor facilities with a priority to high use parks.

- All staff were accounted for by 22 March 2006. Some staff suffered structural damage to their houses and QPWS teams were deployed to assist them. The teams supplied generators, supplies of water and basic food items to the worst affected areas.
- The Atherton district office, the Innisfail sub-district office, and bases at Garners Beach, Josephine Falls, Palmerston, Lake Eacham and Tinaroo were all affected to some extent.
- Requests for community assistance (priority 3 above) had become minimal by the end of week two (post cyclone).
- The success of the priority system (looking after our own staff first to enable them to mentally and physically perform better in ongoing relief and recovery efforts) prompted the critical incident management team to incorporate this system as the model for future responses.

## Cyclone recovery

The following issues (including statement of outcomes) relate specifically to the ongoing recovery phase (late March 2006-ongoing).

### Community support and environmental recovery

- In all, approximately 150 staff (including over 80 staff from outside Northern Region) were made available for cyclone recovery work, in addition to the community assistance provided during the immediate relief phase.
- Ongoing monitoring of post-cyclone green and industrial waste management to ensure maintenance of water quality and other environmental health values.
- Translocation of at-risk cassowaries to reduce high risk human-wildlife interaction.
- Establishment of up to 56 supplementary feeding stations to entice hungry cassowaries away from urban areas and their inherent threats (particularly vehicles and dogs).
- Establishment of public education and awareness campaigns – focusing on human and cassowary safety. Ongoing community meetings and focus groups to improve communication and debate, and to reduce community angst regarding cassowary management.
- Repair of Garners Beach Cassowary Facility. Rehabilitation of sick and/or juvenile birds.
- Despatched heritage officers to identify and assess damage to local heritage places and places on the Queensland Heritage Register. Supported by the Queensland Heritage Council, the EPA provided speedy assessment and provision of technical and legal advice regarding repair of heritage listed buildings.
- The response focussed on quickly approving essential repairs, while guarding against opportunistic demolition of heritage buildings affected by the cyclone.
- Identified priority heritage places eligible for funding from the emergency assistance fund sourced from the Department of Local Government and Planning and administered through local governments authorities.
- 23 parks re-opened within one week of the cyclone. All high visitation and priority tourism related parks re-opened by the end of the first few weeks.

- Approximately 80% of parks and walking tracks re-opened by 30 June 2006 and 95% by December 2006.
- Provision of regular visitor facility updates and reports to peak and individual tourism bodies and operators.
- Collaborative prioritisation of repair work program with tourism industry.
- Provision of foreshore erosion management approvals and technical advice. Meetings held with relevant local government authorities and private landholders. Technical assistance and advice provided, including cyclone related tidal and storm surge data.
- Participation in whole-of-government response to potential second phase threats such as fire, feral pigs and a build-up of riverine debris. In collaboration with relevant State and Local Government authorities, ongoing risk assessment and mitigation strategy development.
- Participation in whole-of-government riverine debris working group to assess State Government at-risk riverine infrastructure.
- Collaborated with research institutions to monitor habitat recovery, particularly in relation to the more specialised or restricted habitats such as the Mabi Forests, and wildlife responses.
- Rehabilitated specific 'at-risk' habitats and wildlife corridors.
- Reviewing fire management strategies in response to the changed ecological state of lowland and mountain rainforests and woodlands.
- Monitoring weed and pest species incursions into cyclone impacted habitat.
- The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) continues to develop a guideline for local government and Main Roads emergency response workers to facilitate environmentally sustainable roadside vegetation clearance within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

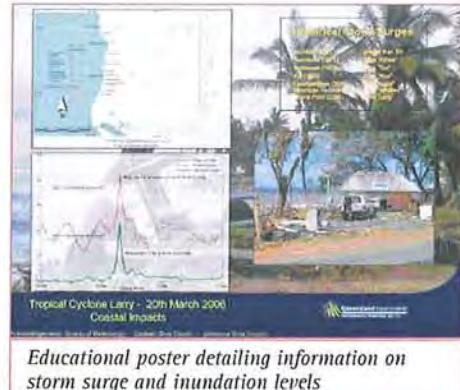
### **Economic recovery and employment**

- QPWS participation in tourism recovery planning and strategy development, with high priority focus on repair and re-opening of protected areas important to tourism industry and recreational groups. Key participant in Queensland Tourism Industry Council post-cyclone product review and recovery plan.
- Identification of industry licensing and permit requirements and facilitation of speedy approval processes particularly in relation to Environmental Protection Act approvals and Nature Conservation Act wildlife damage mitigation permits.
- Implementation and management of 100 person labour market work program (Community Jobs Program) to assist with protected area recovery and neighbour assistance activities.



*Remote Sensing Camera Image of Cassowary Feeding Station*

- Employment of three Mission Beach community members to assist with post-cyclone cassowary management.
- Provision of work projects for Community Development Employment Program Rainforest Aboriginal People e.g. Ma:Mu Weed Busters Team.
- \$530,000 provided in grants to protected area neighbours to assist boundary fencing and access repair where damage occurred from trees falling from adjoining protected areas.



A panel made up of both primary industry and EPA representatives assessed grant applications, with individual assistance grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Industry representation ensured that both public and private sector perspectives were well considered in assessment and decision-making.

- Up to 17 feral pig traps made available for distribution to primary industry neighbours on request.
- QPWS work crews allocated to emergency neighbour (primary industry) fence repairs in early post-cyclone period (under direction of SES).
- Funding arrangement with DPI&F Operation Farmclear for direct boundary fencing assistance to neighbouring farms.
- Following major impacts on Cape York and Gulf road networks, EPA Environmental Operations (Central Office and Northern) fast tracked a code of environmental compliance and changes to the definition of extraction (including regulatory amendment) to facilitate speedy reconstruction and maintenance of roads impacted by flooding.

### Key recovery issues and policy

- In relation to environmental licensing and wildlife mitigation permits, the Agency ensured a responsive and pragmatic approach by fast-tracking some approvals and retrospectively approving others. For example the EPA provided for the establishment and monitoring of un-licensed emergency waste disposal sites to meet emergency debris disposal requirements, but without compromise to environmental values.
- The extended wet season conditions throughout most of 2006 greatly hampered the ongoing recovery by restricting access to more remote and fragile areas. This required the development of a coordinated and responsive approach to recovery work program development and the establishment of highly mobile and flexible work crews who were able to seize upon locally favourable weather opportunities as they arose.
- Although it was essential that the EPA responded quickly to the environmental challenges it faced, including community expectations, it was essential that any activities were environmentally and economically sustainable and did not compromise longer term needs for short term expediency. For example:
  - QPWS was required to make difficult and at times unpopular management decisions to promote the long term survival chances of the cyclone affected

cassowary populations. While some local residents sought to feed hungry cassowaries affected by a reduction in natural food sources, QPWS adopted a program of actively discouraging ad hoc feeding in urban areas and established supplementary feeding stations in natural hinterland areas. The QPWS also translocated 'at-risk' birds to safer habitats and moved sick and malnourished individuals into rehabilitation facilities. These approaches proved to be unpopular with some stakeholders but were very necessary for the enhanced survival chances of the species. They were supported by the then Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage and were consistent with the Environmental Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act. The proactive cassowary community education program also serves to promote the longer term survival of the species and raise public awareness of safety issues.

- The technical advice and support provided by the EPA's Cultural Heritage Branch to heritage listed building owners was designed to meet immediate safety and financial concerns as well as restoring and preserving the heritage values of the buildings for future generations. Extensive engagement with building owners and local government was required to ensure a clear understanding of the needs and interests of all parties, as well as statutory requirements.
- In the aftermath of the cyclone some commercial interests lobbied for a relaxing of environmental constraints to expedite aquaculture pest mitigation and/or infrastructure and tourism development. Although aquaculture and tourism often provides a strong boost to the local economy, the EPA maintained that these activities must still occur in a manner consistent with existing State and Commonwealth environmental legislation and policy. Any post-cyclone aquaculture, tourism and development industry recovery arguably needs to occur in an environmentally sustainable manner so as to preserve those values that attract visitors to the region in the first place and lie at the heart of the region's dual World Heritage Area status. This does not (and did not) preclude the fast tracking of environmental assessment, licencing and approvals where appropriate.

## The way ahead

Anticipated requirements and significant issues going forward, planned activities and responses.

### Lessons learnt

- Local government's disaster planning needs to be improved in the area of environmental waste management. Strategies, such as identifying sites for waste management purposes, should be done long before they find themselves in disaster response mode. EPA officers could have a role in providing technical advice to disaster planning committees. Ideally EPA should become more actively involved in the disaster planning stage with local government and provide technical expertise in an advisory role to government and industry in the aftermath of a disaster. Further to providing this advice, local industry should be reassured by the EPA that the agency will not be inspecting with a view to prosecuting for licensing breaches in these post-cyclone situations if all reasonable environmental precautions have been taken.
- QPWS identified a need, during the critical incident/response phase, to improve operational involvement and communication with lead response agencies such as

the SES and Queensland police. The EPA internal debrief identified that, in some situations:

- QPWS staff were left to wait around, sometimes on a daily basis, for some time before being deployed to specific community assistance tasks
- Deployment occasionally lead to QPWS staff being under-utilised – they were required to undertake non-essential/ non-urgent 'tidy up' work
- Communication between the EPA's Critical Incident Management Team and external stakeholders requires improvement, with clearer and speedier instructions about where our QPWS crews are to be deployed.
- Highly emotive environmental issues including feral pigs, track repair and cassowary management attracted much community attention in the aftermath of the cyclone. QPWS became very aware that an enhanced public consultation and communication strategy was required to overcome misinformation and confusion. However, the Agency will still be required to make hard decisions that will not please all parties. Enhanced communication will at least provide accurate information; it is highly unlikely that we can always 'win the heart and minds' of all stakeholders on all issues. Regular QPWS public cassowary information sheets and media spots and access to the Cyclone Larry Newsletter greatly assisted earlier communication difficulties.
- The capacity to evacuate large number of people from storm tide threatened areas, and to place them in suitable shelter locations were not clearly identified.

### **Responding to Lessons learnt**

- The ongoing response to Tropical Cyclone Larry continues to be reviewed with recommendations implemented to ensure continuous improvement in critical incident management and disaster recovery. Key recommendations to date include the development of a regional crisis management and communication plan (including establishing an enhanced radio network) and ongoing review and training for the QPWS Northern Region critical incident management team. Learnings from the experience continue to be shared with other key external stakeholders through updates, presentations and workshops.
- Environmental Operations will continue to engage with local government and industry (where input is accommodated) to become more actively involved in the disaster planning stage with local government and provide technical expertise in an advisory role to all levels of government and industry in the aftermath of a disaster.
- The QPWS critical incident management team continues to be proactive in working with EMQ/ SES to resolve the communication problems identified during the early Larry response phase. (For example, early contact was made



*Community Job Program Work Crew – Track repair work at Bicton Hill (Mission Beach)*

by the Regional Director QPWS with EMQ providing a list of human and practical resources ahead of any potential threats from TC Nelson and the lows that appeared off the coast in early February 2007).

- Consistent with the now approved 2007-2011 Cassowary Recovery Plan, a standard operating procedure for post cyclone cassowary conservation and management is to be developed over the next few months by QPWS in collaboration with the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Water Resources and relevant stakeholders.
- The EPA will develop adequate guidelines and make these guidelines available to response/recovery teams at Local and District level ensuring that historic cultural heritage issues are addressed early in post event recovery to avoid opportunistic demolition of registered places.
- The EPA will continue to lobby for a higher profile to be afforded to environmental damage mitigation preparedness in forthcoming cyclone summits.
- The issue of evacuation and provision of cyclone shelters was considered at the Cyclone Summit in December 2006 and is expected to be addressed through the Department of Emergency Services review of disaster management arrangements.



QPWS Track Repair Work – Goldsborough Valley

### Ongoing recovery activities

- EPA Cultural Heritage Branch to continue to monitor and provide technical advice as required on ongoing repairs to cyclone damaged properties listed on the State heritage register.
- EPA Environmental Operations to continue to monitor, regulate and provide technical advice on management of cyclone clean-up waste (green and industrial). This is rapidly nearing completion.
- QPWS to continue cassowary management including responding to reported incidents (negative human interaction, injured birds); maintain feeding stations; treat and rehabilitate sick and/or injured birds; and maintain public education and communication program.
- The cassowary supplementary feeding program will continue until forest recovery is sufficient to sustain cassowary populations. It is envisaged that this may take at least another 6 months in some locations. Rainforest recovery continues to be monitored by QPWS staff, private consultants and research institutions. In general, while recovery is progressing, it is occurring at different rates across the affected region, and there is still a long way to go before there will be enough natural food to preclude the need for supplementary feeding stations.

- QPWS will continue ongoing repairs to remaining damaged national parks and walking trails. The tourism sector and the public will be provided with regular updates via email or web site. Most visitor facilities are envisaged to be repaired by end of February 2007, although some of the more remote long distance trails could require until the end of March 2007 (weather permitting).
- In particular the Goldsborough Valley day use area will be re-opened, with completion of repairs to the campground expected by the end of February 2007 (again depending on a reprieve from current weather conditions). The Goldfield Trail (Babinda Boulders to Goldsborough Valley) is not expected to be opened until 31 May 2007.
- QPWS will continue to monitor and manage secondary post-cyclone impacts such as fire, weed and feral animals (mainly feral pigs) on the protected area estate. QPWS will collaborate with other agencies as required for cross-tenure management responses.
- QPWS will continue to work with Aboriginal Traditional Owners in relation to their concerns about impacts of the cyclone on cultural places and traditional fire regimes. This is a new project area so the scope and timeframes are as yet to be fully determined. Focus of discussion will be the mechanics and scope of proposed projects. Wet season conditions will likely hinder progress until later in the year.
- Wet Tropics Management Agency to continue to work with local government and Main Roads to develop and implement (including training) the *Emergency Response Guidelines for Roadside Vegetation Management in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area*.<sup>6</sup>

# Queensland Corrective Services

## Cyclone relief

Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) committed resources for two temporary work camps at Innisfail and Malanda, the use of community service offenders and a work gang of low risk prisoners on day release from Lotus Glen Correctional Centre to provide immediate cyclone relief.

In 1990, volunteer prisoners were organised to assist with the clean up of Charleville following extensive flooding. This led to the development of more than 10 Western Outreach (WORC), subsequently renamed Work Camps. Under the system, a group of up to twelve low-security prisoners live in supervised accommodation in regional and remote communities to undertake supervised community work. The prisoners are supervised by a fully trained custodial correctional officer. The main pre-condition for the Work Camps is that prisoners must be low risk and undertake meaningful work that does not take employment away from local businesses.



A Malanda Cyclone Larry Support Camp was established on 5 April 2006 and operated until 5 June 2006 with 12 Work Camp prisoners and supervisors from Townsville Correctional Centre. This camp assisted local communities, staff from Parks and Wildlife and SES

members to clean up public areas in the Eacham and Herberton Shires in the Atherton Tablelands. Urgent work included the repair of fencing and clearing of public roads to assist cattle to access water catchments. Prior to this assistance being provided, livestock were being destroyed. A total of 3,000 hours of community services over a period of two months was completed by these prisoners and supervising staff.

The Innisfail Cyclone Larry Support Camp was initially drawn from Darling Downs Correctional Centre near Toowoomba in South-East Queensland. This camp left Darling Downs on 27 March 2006 and returned to the centre on 27 April 2006. The work completed by this initial camp was reported as having immediate effective outcomes and its value was acknowledged by local community members and coordinating authorities. This work was completed under extreme conditions of continuous torrential rains and winds. In the initial stages, prisoners were removing up to 20 tip truck loads of debris daily including large roof rafters, roofing iron, destroyed structures and vegetation.

Subsequently, prisoners and staff from northern correctional centres, including Townsville, Capricornia and Lotus Glen provided ongoing assistance to Innisfail, and the camp remains operational. Approximately 12,000 hours of community service has been provided to the Innisfail township and local areas over the 12 month period.

A team of 10 low risk prisoners and supervising officers provided immediate clean up duties in the Herberton Shire.



The prisoners from Lotus Glen Correctional Centre provided assistance from 28 March 2006 to 28 April 2006, removing debris from sporting fields, hospitals, cemeteries and local parks. This work gang returned daily to the centre.

From April 2006 to May 2006, local Probation and Parole offices at Cairns, Innisfail and Mareeba established specific community service projects for offenders sentenced to perform community service hours. Community service and fine option orders are orders issued by the courts and require offenders to make reparation to the community by performing unpaid community service work.

Community service offenders travelled daily to local sites to assist in vegetation clean-up for two days per week over a period of one month, under the supervision of Probation and Parole staff.



## Cyclone recovery

Following the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, Queensland Corrective Services continues to respond with offers of support to the communities. The Minister for Corrective Services and Police, Judy Spence has announced that the Cyclone Larry Work Camp in Innisfail will become a permanent work camp for the region. The agency is currently engaged in seeking a suitable site for a permanent location.

## The way ahead

Work camps are very strongly supported by local communities and are established in response to recognised community need. Additionally, they provide capacity building through the supply of unskilled labour. This allows for the delivery of projects that would not normally be able to be funded or actioned by that community. These projects generally include restoration, land care, maintenance and event based activities in a sustainable setting.

The permanent work camp at Innisfail will allow identified low risk prisoners to continue to undertake restoration work in and around Innisfail. Further consultation with the Department of Emergency Services has identified that there is a long term need for unskilled labour in the surrounding districts for the foreseeable future to continue the delivery of services that assist in re-establishing the community in Innisfail and surrounding areas of Eacham and Herberton Shires.

## Improving processes for the future

For the purposes of future planning, it was clear that co-ordinating agencies were not aware of the services that could be supplied by Work camp prisoners to assist in an emergency. There was an initial unwillingness to include Queensland Corrective Services as an immediate response agency. This made the immediate organisation more difficult and delayed the commencement of work.

# Queensland Health

## Cyclone relief

In the days immediately after Tropical Cyclone (TC) Larry was declared and advice was received that its path would affect coastal communities in far north Queensland, Health Service District emergency plans were activated throughout facilities in the Northern Area Health Service of Queensland Health which were most likely to be affected.

On Monday, 20 March 2006 final emergency procedures were activated throughout the Cairns, Innisfail and Tablelands Health Service Districts, and emergency response teams from the Cairns Tropical Population Health Unit were amongst the first assistance teams to arrive in Innisfail to commence relief assistance.

### **Innisfail Health Service District**

- After the cyclone, 19 inpatients at Innisfail Hospital were evacuated to Cairns or Townsville, so Innisfail staff could concentrate on providing emergency services. A further 11 haemodialysis patients were transferred to Cairns. Outpatient clinics were postponed and seven women in the late stages of pregnancy were referred to Cairns for ante and post-natal care. Normal services were progressively restored from 27 March 2006.
- No deaths or serious injuries were reported as a direct result of the cyclone. The number of patients presenting to emergency in the days after the cyclone were triple the usual number – up to 85 a day, mostly clean-up injuries (eg from falls and chainsaws).
- Innisfail and Babinda hospitals sustained minor damage during the cyclone. Approximately 25 per cent of this damage was repaired within three weeks.
- Relief health staff were immediately deployed to Innisfail and Tablelands areas comprising: 78 nurses from Brisbane, 25 from Townsville, 4 specialist doctors from Brisbane, 5 doctors from Townsville, 11 mental health staff, 30 nurse immunisers and 40 administrative staff for mass flu vaccination clinics.
- 65 staff from the Cairns Health Service District alone, including doctors, nurses, maintenance staff, drivers, cleaners and laundry staff were tasked specifically to respond to the disaster. Cairns District temporarily took over the management of Babinda Hospital to ease the load on Innisfail Hospital staff. Cairns Base Hospital organised a regular daily truck run to the Innisfail District, providing fresh linen, food, staff and medical supplies to Babinda and Tully Hospitals.

### **Tablelands Health Service District**

- 10 beds at Atherton Hospital were evacuated due to water damage. Minor water damage only was sustained to health facilities and equipment in Atherton, Ravenshoe and Mareeba.

## Tropical Population Health Unit

- In the two weeks after the cyclone, 41 Environmental Health Officers from State and local governments travelled to Innisfail from around the state to support the Johnstone Shire Council and disaster groups working in the area. The role of these officers was to ensure residents had access to good drinking water and safe food, help councils with sewerage, waste collection, asbestos disposal issues, and to assist with mosquito control and disease surveillance. The last Queensland Health Environmental Health Officers withdrew from Innisfail on 3 April. Two Environmental Health Officers were deployed to the Tablelands. Fortunately, ongoing support was not required.
- Communicable disease surveillance staff contacted hospitals and health centres daily checking for any outbreaks of disease. There were several reported cases of gastroenteritis in Tully and Mission Beach, most likely related to consumption of unsafe food or water. No common source of infection was identified.
- It was identified that communities under stress are more susceptible to flu, therefore free flu vaccination clinics were conducted by Queensland Health between 3 and 13 April in coastal and Tableland areas affected by the cyclone. 75 staff in nine teams offered free flu vaccinations at 27 locations across the Far North. A total of 7208 people were vaccinated - 5471 in the Innisfail area and 1737 on the Tablelands.
- A series of 'After the cyclone' fact sheets with health advice (food safety, drinking water, floodwater, mosquitoes, safe clean-up) were produced and distributed for Innisfail and Tablelands residents, and for all emergency workers. Fact sheets on asbestos disposal, leptospirosis, the mass flu vaccination clinics, and mental health were produced and distributed.

## Cyclone recovery

Queensland Health was included in the group which comprises the Operation Recovery Management Group. This group was based at the Innisfail TAFE from 3 April 2006 and set about addressing all matters pertaining to the recovery of affected communities following a disaster of the proportion of Cyclone Larry.

Once Queensland Health's initial emergency response had addressed the physical requirements of the population in the areas damaged by Larry, the concentration of effort turned immediately to the long term psychological effects a disaster of this nature is likely to have on communities.

- In response to Cyclone Larry, Queensland Health established the Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team (MHDRT). Immediately after the cyclone, the Cairns Integrated Mental Health Service provided psychological information via print, radio and news outlets to the affected communities, general practitioners and disaster relief services. Pamphlets in several languages other than English were produced to advise the community of possible reactions that people who were exposed to Cyclone Larry might experience. "Tips" fact sheets provided information on coping with anxiety and emotional stress, helping children and young people through disasters, psychological health for rescue workers, and information for GPs on acute stress and trauma. These pamphlets also described strategies to help people recover and the risk factors that may contribute to future mental health problems. Resources on where to gain assistance for debriefing were also circulated to agencies and initial responders.

- The Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team reached its staffing establishment of 6 mental health clinicians, 1 Team Leader, 1 Project Officer and availability of 0.5 of a psychiatrist's time by May 2006. Three clinicians were permanently based in Innisfail and three in the Tablelands. The Executive Director of the Cairns Integrated Mental Health Service was the Mental Health Disaster Commander.
- The Mental Health Disaster Recovery (MHDRT) coordinated an initiative to have 2769 school children across 22 schools in cyclone affected areas screened to measure their level of distress or trauma. The findings revealed that 129 students had fallen into the severe and very severe bands for post-traumatic symptoms and a further 295 needed to be monitored. School Guidance Officers, in consultation with the Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team, are even now delivering a psychological intervention workbook, "Larry and Me" to circumvent the anxiety caused by the cyclone. Dr Brett McDermott, child psychiatrist, Brisbane, was instrumental in the screening protocols. Strategies are currently being developed to follow up and re-screen the children.
- The Mental Health teams are staffed by very experienced mental health clinicians who have been consulting with the community and local workers to identify the most effective way they can assist local communities recover from the effects of Cyclone Larry. They have been collaborating with other services including Department of Communities, Lifeline, Councils, local workers and members of the communities to identify areas of need, and are planning and implementing strategies to assist the community.
- The MHDRT worked in close collaboration with Rotary Australia to organise well known sporting identities to come to Innisfail and the Tablelands to give inspirational talks to community members.
- The number of referrals for moderate to severe psychological disorders to the MHDRT has not been as high as anticipated, (based on international natural disaster evidence).
- Several of the factors that are believed to have influenced the relatively low rate of severe emotional reactions include: the good fortune that there were no fatalities caused by TC Larry; major flooding caused by storm surge did not occur; the community social bonds were strong and strengthened by the rural values placed on helping your neighbours and "getting on with it"; emotional resilience had increased as a result of mental health promotion activities in the community prior to the disaster and the fact that psychological first aid was readily available to the communities very soon after the disaster.
- As part of the preparations for the 2007 cyclone season and the anniversary of Tropical Cyclone Larry, mental health staff have engaged local communities, promoting strength and resilience by providing community based training on the following topics: Critical Incident Stress Management, Mental Health First Aid, Cyclone Management Action Plan, Suicide Awareness and Prevention, Mental Wellness & Stress, Children & Trauma Education, Stress Management, Recognising Depression, Tools for Life, Normalising Stress & Stress Management, Psychological Preparation, Anxiety and Phobia Training.

- The MHDRT procured the services of experts in the Disaster Recovery field and convened a "Recovery and Beyond" workshop, held on 13 February 2007. This workshop was focussed on the aspects of mental health in recovery and was attended by 70 people in Cairns and 30 people in Brisbane from all levels of government, local community organisations and mental health staff. The workshop provided those involved in the Cyclone Larry Community Recovery process the opportunity to conceptualise their experiences in the context of other emergencies and to establish a broad recovery agenda for the next phase of Cyclone Larry recovery. The aim of the workshop was to more fully understand the dynamics of recovery in the medium term and their impact on individuals, families and groups, as well as discussing issues arising from the social, economic and environmental processes in response to Cyclone Larry at the first anniversary.

## The way ahead

Based on the Recovery and Beyond Workshop the following future directions are recommended for the Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team (MHDRT).

- MHDRT are currently holding whole-of-government round table discussions to secure funding to upgrade the interactive story/game "Stormwatchers" to current software standards, with the aim of making it publicly available on the internet. The primary objective of the project is to make available an age appropriate and indigenous appropriate, cyclone awareness educational package that will be available in all Queensland schools and publicly available on the internet by the beginning of the 2007/08 cyclone season.
- The MHDRT will continue its operations until June 30, 2007. The local mental health services will thereafter continue to provide ongoing mental health services to the communities.
- National and international research has shown that it can take up to 7 years for a community to recover following a disaster, taking into account structural, economic, social and emotional well being dimensions. Evidence shows that people will still be experiencing physiological and psychological stress 9 months after a disaster and may continue to worsen for up to 5 years post disaster. Stress levels should return to normal within 7 years.
- Queensland Health is developing an exit strategy that plans the departure of the MHDRT around the actual needs of the people affected by TC Larry. Exit strategies will ensure a clear relationship exists between what people are getting from the recovery systems and provide a thorough handover to local clinicians and community leaders.
- Chronic stress is known to produce health related problems, therefore Community Health Centres, acute health services, community NGO's and mental health services need to be appropriately resourced to ensure the communities affected by Cyclone Larry can still access support services.

# Queensland Police Service

## The Agency

Queensland is one of Australia's most decentralised states, with a population of over four million people. Each year approximately another seven million people visit Queensland for tourism and business. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) is responsible for protecting Queensland residents and visitors, preventing crime and detecting offenders, upholding the law and responding to emergency situations.

The Service is divided into eight geographical regions, covering the 1.7 million square kilometres of coastline, rural lands, cities, towns and shires which comprise Queensland. Three centralised commands assist the individual regions by providing specialist assistance, resources and equipment.

The police regions are divided into districts. There are 29 operational police districts with a further 2 new districts due to become operational by 2008-2009. There are more than 430 police stations and establishments throughout the State and there are over 13,500 members of the QPS.

This geographical spread of facilities across the State gives the QPS a unique advantage in being able to respond to multiple disasters, in multiple locations at the one time, with little or no reduction in parallel 'ordinary' policing of the community.

The QPS also possesses a capacity within its Operational Support Command to rapidly deploy additional resources to affected areas for disaster response and recovery operations.

This allows the QPS to react capably, swiftly and decisively to disaster affected communities who have a natural inclination to immediately turn to their police service in times of crisis.

The QPS is confident of its ability to adapt to meet expectations in such extraordinary circumstances as presented in disasters like Cyclone Larry.

In that light, the QPS considered itself privileged to have played a key part in the response and recovery effort delivered by the Queensland Government.

The QPS performs a key role within the disaster management preparation and response framework for the State of Queensland. Since inception, the QPS has developed expertise in managing localised responses to disasters at the affected community level.

Central to the Service's delivery of coordination and leadership to disaster management are the District Disaster Coordinators (DDCs), who chair the *District Disaster Management Groups created by the Disaster Management Act 2003* (DMA).

For 23 of these districts, this is the senior police officer in charge (Inspector or Superintendent) of the police district with the six Brisbane Metropolitan districts serviced by one DDC.

DDC's are appointed by the Governor in Council pursuant to the DMA and have statutory responsibilities which



PSRT members assist cleanup.



include preparedness, planning and related disaster management and mitigation functions. Senior police including all DDCs have received training in the QPS incident Command System which includes the award winning 'virtual reality' component.

In addition, DDC's and members of the DDMG support Local Government Management Groups (LDMG) with more locally specific planning and response. Local police officers in charge ordinarily provide support and input as members of LDMG's.

Fundamental to the DMA is the principle that in times of disaster, locals in positions of authority unite to deliver visible leadership.

This is important as it gives communities confidence that disaster management plans and mitigation strategies take into account specific characteristics of the local environment.

This approach ensures an affected community can expect a leadership response tailored to deliver the best outcome in the timeliest manner.



Traffic control on cyclone damaged roads.

## Preparedness

The QPS has an ongoing commitment to professional development and training of its staff. All police officers are provided with operational and incident management training.

Officers directly involved in disaster management are regularly updated on changes in relevant policy and legislation. Additionally, the QPS Operational Performance Review includes consideration of district disaster planning and response processes by police managers.

DDC's hold regular meetings with their District Disaster Management Groups (DDMG) and engage in exercises and professional development based on disaster scenarios most likely to occur in their local environment. Local District Disaster Management Plans are developed by the DDMGs and regularly tested and reviewed as part of this process.

### Preparing for Cyclone Larry

On Friday 17 March 2006 the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) advised that a low-pressure system off the coast of Cairns was developing into a tropical cyclone. The system was expected to gather strength and move towards land.

Police in operations centres from Cairns to Townsville, established a watching brief and commenced plotting the weather system, using data supplied by the BOM.

As the system intensified, police district officers prepared to assume their duties as DDCs, immediately transferring responsibility for management of core policing services to a nominated police commissioned officer within their districts, enabling them to focus on their disaster management role. The initial phases of the District Disaster Management Plans were activated.

The DDCs coordinated the warning phase of the disaster management plans and regular alerts were issued to the community by the BOM. At 9.00am, Saturday, March 18, 2006, the State Disaster Coordination Group met at Kedron in Brisbane.



## Response

At the same time the BOM confirmed that the weather system they were tracking had formed into a tropical cyclone in the Coral Sea and was heading towards Cairns and Innisfail.

In consultation with the Regional Command, Far Northern Region, the DDCs activated their disaster management plans for the approaching cyclone.

### Cairns

The Cairns DDMG met at 4pm on 19 March 2006. The District Disaster Coordination Centre in the Cairns Police District Office became operational and preparations were put in place to manage the response to the cyclone. About 50 coastal residents at Yarrabah were evacuated to the local Police Citizens Youth Club which had been established as the evacuation support centre.

### Mareeba

The Mareeba DDC also activated the DDMG on 20 March 2007 and preparations were made for the response to the cyclone. The Mareeba District Disaster Coordination Centre was provisioned and placed on alert.

At 1.30pm on 19 March 2006, the Mareeba District Disaster Coordination Centre was activated by the DDC and the Operations Officer was recalled to duty to manage the centre.

During the afternoon the coordination centre contacted the officers in charge of police divisions across the district and advised them of the nature of the approaching cyclone and reinforced their roles. Local shire councils were also contacted and advised of the situation.

That afternoon, a number of the Local Disaster Management Groups met in the Mareeba District.

At 7.10pm on Monday 20 March 2006, the Mareeba DDC forwarded a request to the State Disaster Management Group seeking the Minister for Emergency Services' declaration of a disaster situation as the result of the damage caused by Cyclone Larry.

### Innisfail

The Innisfail District Disaster Coordinator established the Innisfail District Disaster Coordination Centre in the Innisfail Police Station early Sunday morning, 19 March 2006.

After the meeting with the other DDC's, the Innisfail DDC then directed that members of the Innisfail DDMG be contacted and the group activated.

The Innisfail DDC activated the District Disaster Management plan. Police and the local SES began voluntary evacuations of the coastal impact zones within the Innisfail District and the shires of Johnstone and Cardwell. This process continued until mid-afternoon.

By 3.00pm; however, the situation was such that the Innisfail DDC determined that a declaration of a disaster situation was necessary as the BOM confirmed the projected track of Cyclone Larry was directly towards Innisfail. The Innisfail DDC then forwarded a request to the State Disaster Management Group seeking the Minister for Emergency Services' declaration of a disaster situation.

After the declaration was signed, mandatory evacuations began in low lying coastal areas. This continued into the evening of Sunday 19 March 2006.



Police staff in the Innisfail District Disaster Coordination Centre prepared the direct-exchange telephones, installed and checked computers, fuelled vehicles and tested the back-up radios and back-up generator. All staff members were briefed on the threat the cyclone posed, and of proposed operational activities.

Watchhouse staff transferred prisoners from the Innisfail watchhouse to Cairns and the facility was prepared for use as a cyclone shelter should it be required.

Local police liaised with the harbour master regarding the allocation of safe moorings and with the regional manager, Education Queensland regarding the opening of schools on the Monday morning.

Officers in charge of police divisions within the district were contacted and advised of the precautionary action to be taken. Police attended meetings at the Johnston and Cardwell Shire Councils where arrangements were made for pre-cyclone preparedness. The local TAFE centre was activated as an evacuation centre to receive residents from coastal communities.

### **Cyclone arrival**

At 3.00am Monday 20 March 2006, strong winds and heavy rain hit the Innisfail area and built up throughout the morning. At 4.30am mains power was lost. The cyclone crossed the coast the morning of Monday 20 March 2006, and extensively impacted on the Innisfail area.

As the eye of the storm crossed the coast brief calm settled over the community, police were deployed from secure shelter to make a quick assessment before the cyclone resumed intensity.

That initial assessment indicated that 50-60% of buildings had suffered various degrees of damage; however no final assessment could be made until the cyclone had passed.

Police again withdrew to shelter in the Innisfail Police Complex as the strong winds resumed. The cyclone was assessed by the BOM as a 'fast moving' event.

When the cyclone had passed to the west, the extent of the destruction became apparent. Police resources were immediately tasked with a number of simultaneous responses. These included:

- immediate assessment of the geographical area affected
- identification of persons in need of rescue
- search for any persons seriously injured or killed during the cyclone
- determining the extent of local flooding
- identifying which roads remained open
- assessing the operational capability of the airport
- determining the state of communications
- determining the state of the power grid.

Police communications had remained operational and regular situation reports were forwarded to the Cairns District Disaster Coordination Centre.

At 10.15am Monday 20 March 2006, all police were briefed regarding security of damaged buildings and premises. Officers were placed at intersections within the CBD and mobile patrols moved to wider areas where road conditions permitted.



Officers were detailed specific areas of responsibility and were dispatched to duties within the Johnstone and Cardwell Shire Councils Local Government Disaster Groups. Other officers were assigned to emergency accommodation and evacuation centres to work with the Department of Communities and volunteers to ensure their smooth and effective operation.

While continuing to respond to calls for service, officers were also tasked to conduct welfare visits to isolated and damaged areas where they provided assistance and support to those most affected by the cyclone.

Over the following weeks the Innisfail DDC maintained the Disaster Management Coordination Centre and coordinated the responses and calls for assistance by the two local Government areas. The administrative unit of the Defence Forces also set up headquarters within the Innisfail Police District Office and worked together in coordinating relief efforts to the community. This centre continued to operate on a 24 hour basis until late April 2006.

### **Cairns situation**

Cyclone Larry caused disruptions in the Cairns and Mareeba Disaster Districts. In the southern corridor of the Cairns Disaster District some buildings received structural damage. There was also significant environmental damage and flooding. The Gilles Highway, Kuranda Range Road and Bruce Highway to Innisfail were cut for an extended period of time.

Due to the extent of the devastation caused in the Innisfail Disaster District, the Cairns DDMG also provided support to the Innisfail DDMG.

In particular, the Cairns group supported the townships of Babinda and Bramston Beach, as these communities were isolated from Innisfail. This support was provided up until Thursday 23 March 2006. At that time Innisfail was sufficiently resourced to support itself and the towns in the district.

On Thursday 23 March 2006, the Cairns DDMG ceased operations as all matters in the district had been resolved.

### **Mareeba situation**

As Cyclone Larry crossed the coast at Innisfail and travelled inland the primary effect within the Mareeba Disaster District was in the areas around Eacham, Herberton and Atherton Shires.

Over 125 houses and hundreds of sheds were damaged across the tablelands. One person was seriously injured at Ravenshoe suffering two broken legs.

The Mareeba DDMG met at 9.00am on Tuesday 21 March 2006 and continued to meet on a daily basis for some weeks after the initial impact with the only change being a relocation of the meetings to Atherton Shire Council Chambers and then later with members participating via teleconference.

### **Support services**

Once the cyclone had moved inland and the extent of the devastation was realised, senior police in Cairns made requests for additional policing resources to be moved as soon as possible to the disaster area to support local police. The extra police being needed to supplement the disaster management arrangements and assist in maintaining core policing services.



The QPS also activated a plan to deploy policing resources from the Specialist Support Branch (SSB) of the Operations Support Command based in Brisbane. Members of the Public Safety Response Team (PSRT) and Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) were immediately moved to the affected areas on commercial flights and police air transport. The first SSB resources were in the disaster area within one hour of the cyclone crossing the coast.

Over the period of the operation a total of 85 members from the SSB were deployed to the rescue and recovery phases of the various operations. Members were deployed for a total of three months with final withdrawal of all SSB resources to Brisbane on 17 May 2006. Resources were provided by the:

- Public Safety Response Team
- Special Emergency Response Team
- Railway Squad
- Mounted Police Unit
- State Traffic Support Branch

Police from Townsville also assisted policing services in the area and two special purpose vehicles (commonly known as "booze buses") were also deployed to assist the Department of Communities. The buses were used as mobile offices to provide relief payments to people in isolated communities.

Nine members of SSB, from the PSRT and Railway Squad, later returned to Innisfail to provide assistance with the management of the State Government "thank you" function. This included policing support for the function and policing of the wider Innisfail District at the same time.

This ability to promptly deploy additional police resources demonstrated the capacity of the QPS to provide support to regional or district communities in times of disaster. By managing the disaster as a multi-incident scenario the response could be boosted without affecting regular policing responsibilities.

### **Recovery**

The early appointment of General Peter Cosgrove AC, MC (Retd) as head of the Operation Recovery Task Force assisted the local DDC for the majority of the recovery tasks. The Task Force quickly developed processes and procedures for attending to the coordination of recovery and rehabilitation to the devastated community. The Task Force was particularly effective in coordinating the transition from response and more immediate consequence management matters to short and longer term recovery coordination.

A reduction in reported crime was noted across the cyclone affected area. This is attributed to the character of the local community and the Police response which focused on personal safety and the security of damaged properties.



## **QPS support to the Operation Recovery Task Force**

Two senior police and an administration officer from Far Northern Region, were seconded to the Operation Recovery Task Force to supplement General Cosgrove's personal staff.

The senior police involved assisted with the establishment of the Mayors' and CEOs' monthly consultative meetings and the economic recovery of the community by assisting in the implementation of the Industry Advisory Groups involving sugar and banana growers.

They also attended to specific problem solving tasks directed to the Operation Recovery Task Force and provided coordination and analysis of requests for funding for community infrastructure replacement projects. The officers remained in this role until the 20 March 2007.

In addition to this a senior QPS representative was seconded to the Cyclone Larry Coordination Unit within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to assist with policy and coordination support.

### **The future**

There were many lessons learnt from Cyclone Larry and all agencies will no doubt conduct their own analysis to help prepare for future emergencies. The QPS will use the experience to enhance planning, preparation, training and exercises and coordination with other agencies.

During the response, the District Disaster Management (DDM) structure proved to be a most effective method in delivering visible leadership and it supported the SDCC by assisting with local knowledge, experience and expertise which has developed through the DDM framework for many years.

In events of the scale of Cyclone Larry the provision of staff and resources from a multitude of government and non-government agencies is critical to aiding the community in responding and recovering from the disaster. It is essential in a protracted response that staff are able to be rotated and for responsibilities to be shared. The Queensland Police Service is demonstrably able to effectively contribute in all key areas of preparation, response and recovery in that regard.



# Queensland Transport

The Transport Portfolio consists of Queensland Transport (QT), the Department of Main Roads (MR), and QR. In a disaster situation, the Portfolio's role is the provision of transport and transport engineering solutions. Since Tropical Cyclone Larry struck North Queensland near Innisfail on 20 March 2006, Transport Portfolio staff have played a role in the initial response and the long-term recovery of the region.

## Cyclone relief

In the TC Larry relief phase, Transport Portfolio representatives cleared and opened roads and the rail network; liaised with and responded to State and District Disaster Coordination Centre requirements; delivered resources and supplies to destinations in the affected region; and transported volunteers and staff to and from affected areas.

### Transport Portfolio Agencies

- Pre-cyclone preparations included the checks of transport infrastructure and boat harbours including checking of boat moorings, as well as confirmation of agency disaster management contacts.
- Transport Portfolio representatives were located at the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) in Brisbane and Cairns, and the District Disaster Coordination Centres (DDCC) in Cairns, Townsville, Mareeba and Innisfail to liaise with and respond to requests for transport solutions.
- Queensland Transport (QT), through portfolio partners and private organisations, delivered by air, rail and road, all requested freight resources to their destination within tight timeframes.
- QT arranged flights and road charters for the transport of personnel – volunteers and staff – to and from the region to assist with the response.
- Both road and rail transport infrastructure inspections commenced after the cyclone when it was safe to do so.

### Ports

- Prior to TC Larry landfall, Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) closed Mourilyan Harbour and arranged for the movement of ships to safe waters to protect them and port infrastructure from cyclone damage.
- The port remained closed after the cyclone so hydrographical surveys of the harbour could be conducted.
- The Port of Mourilyan suffered severe damage to the harbour's navigational aid equipment.
- Apart from some minor building damage, there was no substantial damage to other port facilities. Some building damage was repaired as a priority and a general port clean up took place.

## Rail

- QR cleared the rail network of debris and vegetation.
- Repairs were undertaken to isolated rail track washouts associated with flooding of the line.
- The first ballast train operated through Innisfail undertaking flood repair works on 24 March 2006.
- Restricted rail freight and passenger services on the corridor were reinstated from 25 March 2006.
- Until generators and mains power could be established, QR staff operated rail line level crossings and traffic protection where power had been cut to the flashing lights. This enabled trains to utilise the cleared track while other restoration activities continued.

## Road

- The Department of Main Roads (MR) cleared roads of vegetation and debris, and provided road engineering advice as needed.
- Road condition reports were provided on a daily basis to inform stakeholders and the public.
- The Bruce Highway was repaired and operational on a "drive with care" basis from Cairns to Innisfail on 21 March 2006 and Innisfail to Townsville on 22 March 2006.
- 3500 road signs were damaged throughout the cyclone affected areas.

## Air

- Air transport in Cairns was only affected on the day of TC Larry and the Innisfail airport reopened the day after the Cyclone.
- Cairns aerodrome began receiving emergency equipment and supplies by 22 March 2006 and received the majority of air freighted resources.
- Innisfail aerodrome was cleared of debris quickly and was able to receive Australian Defence Force (ADF) Hercules flights with emergency resources. QT coordinated transport arrangement with the ADF to move large freight, such as generators, directly to Innisfail.

## Cyclone recovery

The Transport Portfolio has provided support to the Operation Recovery Task Force through representation at the Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) and the timely response to requests for the transportation of resources and recovery personnel.

### Transport Portfolio Agencies

- The Portfolio responded in a timely manner to requests from the Operational Recovery Task Force for the transport of equipment, volunteers and staff for the recovery effort.
- Transport Portfolio representatives have provided support and advice to the ORMG in Innisfail since its inception in April 2006.

- QT provided technical advice to local governments on the capability of local airports to receive urgent emergency supplies.
- QT arranged air transport to move urgently needed equipment including generators, defibrillators, chainsaws, roofing material and communications equipment.
- 1200 tons of equipment and freight were transported to TC Larry affected areas, including 41 tons of freight and equipment which was airlifted from southern airports to Cairns by commercial aircraft.
- Heavy vehicles and operators were sourced locally in north Queensland to transport palletised mixed freight arriving in Cairns and bound for the affected area.
- QT arranged buses in locations around the State to transport SES volunteers and government officers to and from where they were needed in the affected region.
- Air travel to/from Cairns was arranged for over 3,000 staff and volunteers.
- Transport was arranged for volunteers and staff accommodated in Cairns to clean-up locations in the damaged areas and their return to home locations on rotation. This included an ongoing shuttle to move volunteers to and from Innisfail on a 12 hour shift basis.
- 2700 passenger transfers were arranged by bus eg. from Cairns/Innisfail & Airport/ Hotel transfers in Cairns and Brisbane.
- A free bus service was set up to run between Cairns and Innisfail for workers and the Innisfail community. This operation continued until October 2006.
- Portfolio regional and district disaster management staff from around the State were rotated in key locations to ensure maximum support to the recovery effort.
- Portfolio and internal agency debriefs were conducted in Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane, to establish Portfolio learnings from the TC Larry response and recovery.
- Findings and recommendations from the debrief process were developed and are being incorporated into Portfolio disaster management policies and procedures.
- Strategies and continuing treatments have been developed to ensure that the Transport Portfolio continues to manage good relationships for planning and service delivery outcomes.
- Portfolio agencies have reviewed their pre-cyclone procedures.
- The State Transport Disaster Management Plan (a functional agency sub-plan of the State Disaster Management Plan) and the associated Portfolio sub-plans are being updated to include the learnings from TC Larry.



*Loading vital recovery stores onto transport*

## Rail

- QR conducted technical assessments of damaged rail tracks, bridges and level crossing systems.
- Rail lines were cleared of debris and vegetation and key communication facilities on the rail network were assessed and repaired.
- Technical assessments of damaged tracks were conducted and QR expedited ballast trains and crews to replace rail ballast washed away by floodwaters.
- The rail network was operating with safety limitations by 26 March 2006. Initially trains only operated during daylight hours with the level crossings manually operated.
- QR provided Traffic Protection Officers to staff level crossing points whilst repairs were being undertaken on automated level crossing equipment. Power was re-established to ten level crossings in the affected area in line with the return of power to the wider community.
- The rail network, including level crossing systems, was fully operational by 1 April 2006.
- There were no traffic incidents at level crossing points while points were being manually operated.
- All damaged railway signage, including signage at level crossings, was replaced by the end of April 2006.
- A new QR communications tower at Graham Range has been commissioned.
- QR has developed a dedicated Cyclone Hazard Plan for North Queensland, to address the shortfalls identified in agency procedures for cyclones in north Queensland.
- Vegetation clearing at culverts was completed in September 2006.
- Portfolio administrative processes are being introduced to enable QR personnel to be traffic controllers in emergencies.



*Cleaning up the railway crossing at Johnstone River*

## Ports

- The Port of Mourilyan was cleared of debris.
- Technical assessments were undertaken on the port, the harbour, and the off-shore navigation aids to ensure continued safe operation of shipping. There was no damage to port infrastructure from unmoored shipping.
- A hydrographic survey of the Port of Mourilyan and its entrance was conducted. No vessels sank in the port as a result of TC Larry.
- Minor building damage to port infrastructure was repaired. Some minor repairs took several months due to the shortage of labour. This allowed available labour to be utilised for more urgent jobs in the area.

- Sea wall repairs at Bingle Bay and Johnstone River (East Innisfail) were carried out.
- Inspections and repair of off-shore navigation aids to ensure continued safe operation of large, commercial shipping was completed by 28 April 2006.
- The Port of Mourilyan was reopened by the regional harbourmaster to commercial shipping three weeks after TC Larry.

### Road

- MR conducted technical assessments of flooded roadways and cleared roads of major debris.
- All MR road surfaces were cleared of debris by 24 March 2006.
- MR provided regular updates to the RACQ to keep road users informed of road conditions and accessibility.
- MR and RoadTek provided engineering advice and road repair assistance as needed to local Councils to open up roads as soon as possible.
- Road repairs and roadside tree clearing were ongoing for much of the recovery period.
- Over 3,500 road signs have been replaced. By 30 June 2006, 93% of damaged MR regulatory/warning signs were replaced and an assessment of damaged MR directional signs was completed. By October 2006, all road signage had been replaced.
- Maintenance to road, rail and bridge infrastructure is ongoing.
- Procedures are being developed to ensure improved coordination of information from adjoining MR districts in relation to providing comprehensive information on road closures.
- RoadTek's responsibilities to provide support in a disaster response are being clarified and procedures refined to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.



*Cleaning up the Palmeston Highway*

## The way ahead

The Transport Portfolio is undertaking a review of its disaster management responsibilities and capabilities, including its disaster management plans, training programs, policies and arrangements, to ensure learnings from the TC Larry response and recovery experience, both at an agency level and a whole-of-government level, are incorporated into Portfolio policy and practice. Some specific activities being undertaken include:

- Upgrade of specific sections of the Bruce Highway between Townsville and Cairns will commence in late 2007. Planning is already underway.
- Implementation of Transport Portfolio lessons learnt from TC Larry is ongoing and being integrated into training and operational procedures and policy.
- The review of the Transport Portfolio's disaster management arrangements is ongoing, in line with the review of Queensland's disaster management arrangements.
- The State Transport Disaster Management Plan and associated sub-plans are being reviewed to incorporate lessons learnt from the TC Larry experience.
- The Portfolio is addressing internal awareness of disaster management arrangements, responsibilities, obligations, liaison functions and reporting mechanisms and developing procedures to promote disaster management relationship building and understanding of role and responsibility requirements.
- Review of Rail Support to Disaster Management Plan being conducted to include information obtained from TC Larry learnings.
- Strategies are being developed to enhance disaster management sustainability through regional/state planning, training and support. Methods for better integrating disaster management responsibilities into routine workloads for Liaison Officers are being explored.
- Information management capability through regional and district Liaison Officers is being reviewed in light of lessons learnt from TC Larry reviews.
- Liaison with Department of Emergency Services is underway regarding the development of a Transport Portfolio sub-portal on the disaster management community web site.
- Internal communication system capability (other than phones and emails) are being considered to provide coverage if service providers require time to re-establish links.
- Ongoing promotion of portfolio collaboration to provide support to DDCCs and SDCCs.
- The Portfolio is developing disaster response and recovery documentation to streamline the capture of data and costs.
- The Transport Portfolio has identified the need to better integrate its response plans with other functional agencies to prevent overlap of tasking and transport functionality, as this can complicate the demand placed on local transport suppliers.
- The Transport Portfolio was required to support 3 DDCCs and 2 SDCCs. All four Queensland Transport regions were activated to coordinate requested resources. The Portfolio is working to clarify how roles and responsibilities for multiple centres could be identified and clearly understood. This will enable effective agency planning and support.

# Queensland Treasury

## Cyclone relief and recovery

Treasury's role in Cyclone Larry relief and recovery was primarily reflected in its central agency responsibilities, particularly in relation to policy and funding issues associated with the government's response to the disaster.

Treasury, through the Queensland Government Insurance Fund (QGIF) facilitated the engagement of two insurance advisors to support General Cosgrove in his dealings with the insurance industry's response to the cyclone. The support included strategic communication to the taskforce and community liaison on insurance issues. The arrangement commenced in April 2006 with an advisory service subsequently operating out of the Building Coordination Centre (BCC) in Innisfail.

Affected parties made contact with the advisors who in turn liaised with the insurers in addressing any concerns relevant to a wide range of insurance claim issues. Regular reporting by QGIF to the taskforce was provided, identifying issues with relevant insurers and the relevant loss adjustor or repairer.

A comprehensive report on the activities of the independent insurance advisors forms Attachment 27.

## The way ahead

Underinsurance was an issue with the cyclone claims as it has been in previous natural disasters such as the Canberra bushfires. The underinsurance impact is exacerbated by the higher repair costs following a major disaster. The issue of underinsurance is being canvassed with the insurance industry, and in recent times there have been significant developments in policy wordings of householders' insurance. Some insurers have introduced automatic escalation of the sum insured in disasters to compensate for the increased costs whereas others have moved to full indemnity with no specified sum insured.

## **Special Recovery Machinery Contributions**

# Australian Government Tropical Cyclone Larry Report

## Australian Government

The primary role in planning for and co-ordinating the response to domestic disasters rests with State and Territory Governments. The Australian Government assists by providing tailored recovery assistance to disasters of national significance as was the case for Queensland's Tropical Cyclone Larry.

### Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee (AGDRC)

The Australian Government is committed to the provision of a coordinated approach to delivering recovery assistance to individuals, families and communities in response to domestic disasters or critical events. The Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) chairs the AGDRC which has responsibility for coordinating Australian Government social and community recovery assistance following domestic disasters or critical events. The AGDRC comprises senior officials from 27 Australian Government central, policy, program delivery and specialist agencies. It is also responsible for preparations to mitigate the social and community impacts of major disasters.

The AGDRC was activated and met regularly in the immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Larry. It developed the Australian Government's assistance response package for those people and communities adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry, such as ex-gratia payments, business assistance and income support.

The Chair of the AGDRC was invited to participate in meetings of the Queensland State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) as the Federal Government representative. The links established with the SMDG facilitated collaboration between the Australian and Queensland Government on issues arising in the implementation of Australian Government assistance packages for Tropical Cyclone Larry.

The AGDRC is developing an evaluation framework, which will be designed to examine individual components of Australian Government assistance packages and provide insight into the effectiveness of recovery assistance from a whole-of-government perspective.

## Australian Government Assistance Measures

### Standing Arrangement

#### *Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements*

The Department of Transport and Regional Services administers the Australian Government's Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). These are designed to alleviate the financial burden that natural disasters cause State and Territory governments and communities. Through the NDRRA, the Australian Government provides financial support to disaster-affected communities to help them get back on their feet as quickly as possible following a natural disaster.



Australian Government

Under the NDRRA the Australian Government provides partial reimbursement (up to 75 per cent) of state government expenditure above certain thresholds on a range of relief and recovery measures including:

- personal hardship and distress expenditure such as emergency food, clothing and accommodation, emergency repairs to housing and replacement of essential household items and personal effects;
- restoration or replacement of essential public infrastructure such as roads and bridges; and
- concessional interest rate loans to small businesses, primary producers and voluntary non-profit bodies.

## Recovery Assistance Measures for Tropical Cyclone Larry

The Australian Government developed a whole-of-Australian Government assistance package to help meet the needs of various groups affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry, including individuals, farmers and business owners. Individual agencies were responsible for particular elements of the assistance package. In total, the Australian Government spent over \$277.8 million on assistance for people affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry. The assistance package included:

- Over \$236.7 million in Australian Government assistance provided directly to affected communities in Far North Queensland;
- A \$40 million advance under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA); and
- \$1.1 million contribution to the Prime Minister's and Premier's Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal.

### Department of Transport and Regional Services

#### ***Additional NDRRA measures***

Additional NDRRA measures implemented for TC Larry included:

- a \$40 million advance payment to the Queensland Government to provide immediate assistance to cover personal hardship and distress expenses for affected individuals and assist with urgent efforts to rebuild public infrastructure;
- an increase in the standard concessional interest rate loan from \$100,000 to \$500,000 with the first 25 per cent offered as a grant component capped at \$50,000. The loans were interest free for the first two years. No repayments were required during this time;
- generator hire to allow dairy farms and aquaculture businesses to operate equipment to alleviate the distress or maintain the life of cows and fish and other aquatic organisms while power was down in the area;
- a free daily bus service between Cairns and Innisfail for residents to travel from temporary accommodation in Cairns back to their homes and communities for three months; and
- up to \$10 million for the Queensland Government's Operation Farm Clear Program which assisted primary producers with the removal of debris from farms and return to profitable operations quickly.



### ***Delivery mechanisms***

NDRRA measures were delivered by a number of state agencies including:

- Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority
- Queensland Transport
- Department of Housing
- Department of Communities

The Queensland Department of Emergency Services undertook overall coordination of Australian Government NDRRA measures. Coordination of Australian Government and Queensland Government activities through a designated contact point by both governments was advantageous.

### **Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)**

FaCSIA played a significant role in the Australian Government assistance package delivered to assist families, communities and businesses adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry. Many officers from a number of FaCSIA branches and FaCSIA's Queensland State Office contributed to this work which enabled the Department to respond in a timely manner.

FaCSIA was responsible for a number of the Australian Government assistance measures. The total contribution by the department amounted to approximately \$50.4.

#### ***Homes Destroyed/Uninhabitable***

Over \$37.9 million for 38,697 ex-gratia payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child for people whose principal place of residence was destroyed, or rendered uninhabitable or inaccessible for more than two weeks.

#### ***Fuel Excise Relief***

Over \$2.3 million for 7,000 ex-gratia payments of \$280 per month for households and \$560 per month for businesses and farmers, for a one-off diesel and petrol fuel excise relief payment. This subsidised payment assisted businesses, farmers and households that generated their own electricity until normal services were restored.

#### ***Income Support Program***

Over \$8.8 million for 2,311 ex-gratia income support payments for farmers and small business operators, equivalent to the Newstart Allowance. This six-month payment helped farmers and small businesses deprived of income to pay their day-to-day bills and focus on the immediate task of rebuilding their farms and businesses.

Other FaCSIA assistance included:

- Over \$320,000 in Emergency Relief funding to twelve organisations.
- Over \$1.2 million provided through the Community Housing and Infrastructure program (CHIP) to the Queensland Government for up to four factory-built houses for the Indigenous people in the Innisfail area.



**Australian Government**

## Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

### ***Business Assistance Fund***

The Cyclone Larry Business Assistance Fund was part of the suite of assistance measures provided by the Australian Government to victims of the cyclone. It provided one-off tax-free grants of \$10,000 - or \$25,000 where exceptional costs or losses were demonstrated - to eligible businesses, including small businesses and farmers, adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry. The grants assisted with short-term urgent tasks associated with restocking, replanting, re-establishment and cleaning-up as well as ensuring business continuity.

Centrelink delivered the Business Assistance Fund with policy advice provided by the Office of Small Business in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

As at the 8 March 2007, \$140.55 million had been granted to 8,062 businesses under the Cyclone Larry Business Assistance Fund.

### ***Staffing – Small Business Field Officers***

Within a week of the cyclone, the Australian Government, through AusIndustry in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, deployed an additional four Small Business Field Officers (SBFOs) for periods of between three to six months to augment the services of the two SBFOs already deployed in Far North Queensland (FNQ).

SBFOs provide a referral and general advisory service to small business about government services available from all levels of government. The extra SBFOs complemented the work of Australian Government and State Government agencies in assisting thousands of small businesses in the cyclone-affected area. More than thirty thousand enquiries from small businesses in FNQ were answered in 2006, more than double the number for the previous year.

## Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

### ***Wage subsidy***

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations developed and implemented a wage subsidy for employers in the Cyclone Larry affected area to help them retain their workers and re-commence production as quickly as possible.

The wage subsidy commenced on 4 April, 2006. Employers were paid \$200 per week for 13 weeks for each full-time equivalent employee (a total of up to \$2,600 per employee). In response to ongoing poor weather in the area which hampered business capacity to get back into production, the wage subsidy was extended to 26 weeks (\$5,200 per employee) and employers were given additional time to claim assistance.

Applications for wage subsidies closed on 31 August 2006. Payments of just over \$47.2 million were made to nearly 1,600 businesses in the cyclone-affected area.

## Centrelink

### **Staffing – service delivery**

Some 1,700 Centrelink staff from across Australia were involved in the provision of assistance to affected communities within the declared disaster area. These staff processed claims and provided call centre assistance from their home Area location. At the height of relief operations over 200 service advisory and specialist rural and business staff directly assisted on the ground at any one time.

Centrelink staff were deployed at various stages to 19 communities in the Innisfail, Atherton and Cairns environs. They were usually co-located with Queensland State Government Community Recovery Centres and transient One Stop Shops (13 in total).

Centrelink targeted field outreach activities in the affected areas to gather information on customer needs to help support local citizens. It contacted community support organisations to explain the assistance and processes to manage claims for assistance.

A key element of community outreach to persons in distress and need was the extensive efforts of Centrelink Social Workers. They worked collaboratively with State Government and Non Government Organisations to assess and refer individuals to appropriate assistance and provide personal support. Seven to 15 Social Workers were engaged at varying times. By working closely with the Red Cross at grass roots levels, Centrelink was able to identify and fill quickly, gaps where support was not readily available.

### **Delivery of financial assistance measures**

Centrelink delivered the following relief packages on behalf of the Australian Government:

- an ex-gratia package for individuals consisting of \$1,000 per eligible adult and \$400 per eligible child;
- a one-off, tax-free, grant of \$10,000 for farmers and small business owners. Businesses that could demonstrate significant losses were eligible for an additional grant amount of \$15,000 (a total of \$25,000);
- income support for farmers and small business owners equivalent to the rate of Newstart Allowance; and
- fuel excise relief grant for people having to generate their own electricity due to power outages.

As at 01 March 2007, Centrelink had delivered over \$189 million in assistance payments and granted over 60,000 claims, including:

- 38,697 ex-gratia claims;
- 12,060 business assistance fund claims;
- 2,311 income support claims; and
- 7,000 fuel excise relief claims.

Centrelink's Tropical Cyclone Relief Hotline continues to operate. As at close of business 01 March 2007, over 48,000 calls had been answered.

Centrelink continues to work very closely with the Queensland Government authorities and the local Community Recovery Centres. It is implementing temporary ex-gratia assistance for income support recipients whose houses were affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry and who have been unable to rebuild within the normal 12 month period.



Australian Government

# Building Coordination Centre



General Cosgrove, QBSA General Manager Ian Jennings and others at the Home Expo in Innisfail.

## Introduction

The Building Coordination Centre (BCC) was established to streamline the rebuilding of the region of Far North Queensland ravaged by Cyclone Larry.

The BCC officially opened on April 13, 2006, three weeks after the cyclone, to assist consumers and contractors in Cyclone-affected areas.

The BCC's charter was to facilitate and coordinate insurance company and building industry activities.

The Centre continues to provide advice, guidance and coordination of building services to the community and contractors.

## Cyclone Relief and Recovery

Prior to the cyclone, the BCC was not an entity within the Queensland model for disaster recovery. Therefore, there was no involvement by the entity now known as the BCC immediately following the event.

However, the Queensland Building Services Authority (BSA) was directly involved in the immediate response to Cyclone Larry, with early input into the repair and rebuilding issues raised by the Operation Recovery Task Force, Government departments and agencies.

## Post Cyclone

Following consultation between the BSA General Manager and the head of the Operation Recovery Task Force, General Peter Cosgrove, it was agreed and announced to the community that a Building Coordination Centre (BCC) be established to assist in rebuilding the cyclone-affected area. The affected areas were covered by:

- Cairns City Council
- Johnstone Shire
- Eacham Shire
- Atherton Shire
- Mareeba Shire
- Herberton Shire
- Cardwell Shire
- Etheridge Shire
- Croydon Shire.



BCC staff in Innisfail

## Role

The BCC was established to facilitate coordination of insurance company and building industry activities by:

- Developing an improved working relationship between insurance companies where appropriate, and between the insurance industry and other players involved in rebuilding and repairs,
- Developing an improved working relationship between building companies where appropriate, and between the building industry and other players involved in rebuilding and repairs; and
- Facilitating availability and consistency of building services associated with the demolition and reconstruction of affected properties.

The strategy behind these programs was to introduce to the building and insurance industry a mechanism for expedited coordination of the rebuild.

## Presence

The BSA assumed administrative and strategic responsibility for BCC operations with a reporting function to the Task Force. Its charter was to assist with the coordination and rebuilding of those parts of North Queensland damaged by Cyclone Larry.

The BCC operations were located in the Country Women's Association (CWA) Hall in Innisfail, which had been volunteered by the CWA in line with that organisation's Constitution following disasters.

It proved a challenge to commission the BCC office from a primitive base (CWA Hall) to an operational facility which included phones, data, electricity, security, furniture and office equipment, carpets. Information Technology (phone lines, data lines) took priority and were installed and operational within a week of opening.

Staff on the ground worked in oppressive conditions without air conditioning and lacking suitable facilities for some time, whilst delivering exceptional support and services to many members of the community.

Satellite BCC services were established in other locations (Malanda/Ravenshoe/Mission Beach) over time and operated for some three months in these areas.

Upon commissioning of the BCC, key staff focused attention on logistical issues like staffing, administration and operational matters.

Human resources provided a challenge with more than sixty BSA Brisbane, regional and local staff working at the Centre since inception. The availability of accommodation in the affected area was limited, necessitating staff to travel long distances in adverse weather conditions to perform their duties.

Cairns office staff were seconded for their local knowledge, customer service and administration expertise, although this could not be sustained and was a drain on Cairns office resources.

Three local people were employed as customer service officers by the end of May 2006.

Brisbane staff with licensing, building inspection and certification experience, were rostered into the Centre.

Regional managers from Cairns and Rockhampton were seconded to assist with technical and operational issues. A locally-based BSA Board member was also based at the Centre.

Initially operational decisions were introduced with a results-based strategy implemented to expedite assistance provided to the BCC's clientele. Practices were altered to suit the changing parameters of the recovery effort.

The appointment of an Area Manager in early June 2006 allowed for the consolidation of operations and introduction and implementation of procedures.

The appointment of a permanent Compliance officer and Building Inspector in early September 2006 facilitated the progress of a strategic approach to compliance issues, and allowed opportunity for the Area Manager to focus more time and energy on management issues.

On 27 November 2006, the office moved to permanent premises in Innisfail at 1/56 Rankin Street and will allow for transitioning of BCC to BSA core operations after December 2007.

## Activity

A major element of the BCC's activities involved offering building advice to the community, and the co-ordination and streamlining of the building and approval processes.

A further objective was to emphasise the importance of the improved working relationship between regulatory bodies and other parties (eg: Insurers) involved in reconstruction and repair by improving access to, and the speed of, the approvals process.

A proactive case-management approach was taken in the resolution of cases presenting at the BCC. This approach included the aim to where possible solve the consumer's problem at the initial point of contact. For example, putting consumers in contact with available contractors at the time the consumer visited the BCC office; contacting insurance companies and the Insurance Ombudsman Service to discuss consumer concerns such as the progress of their claim, or concerns about the scope of work.

BCC service delivery was designed to complement and support the work already being undertaken by the many and varied public and private sector groups within the community.

The basis of the approach was to identify dominant factors which could prolong reconstruction. These included:

Insurance Issues –contractor availability, co-ordination of resources, planning issues and building approval issues.

The Task Force engaged two Independent Insurance Advisors to assist residents in their dealings with Insurers. The advisors are based full-time at the BCC and attend on a fortnightly rotational basis.

To February 2007 the advisors have assisted over 450 clients (individuals, families and businesses). The advantage the service has delivered is in expediting residents' insurance claims through direct contact with insurance agencies representatives. The advisors have built a strong reputation for outcome driven results with the majority of cases resolved within two days post-presentation.

Insurance issues have fallen into three distinct categories:

- Insured – fully insured,
- Underinsured – insurance policy value did not cover rebuilding cost; and
- Uninsured – no insurance coverage.

A subsequent sub-category is "cash settled" clients, who were either insured or underinsured and chose to accept a cash settlement and handle their own rebuild.

The advisors, with the technical and administrative support of the BCC, have played an integral role in providing expert advice and reassurance to residents affected by Cyclone Larry.

Building Issues – Approval and Certification issues, disputes relating to the quality of work and unfinished work.

Ensuring compliance with legislative requirements, applicable to the building and construction industry, was identified by the BCC as an essential component of the rebuilding effort. Issues included:

- maintaining building standards,
- supply and licensing of suitably qualified workers,

- provision of consumer and contractor protection; and
- guarding against structural failure of buildings in future events.

The Building Coordination Centre developed a strategy to address these issues. The BCC management, in the first seven months after the cyclone, met with the key insurance companies and the Insurance Council of Australia on a weekly basis to try to resolve any concerns about the rebuilding process in a collective way.

Issues that were discussed at these meetings included demolition, removal of debris, certification, building standards and price monitoring. These meetings were extremely useful and allowed for key decisions to be made on critical issues for dissemination to all insurance companies by the Insurance Council of Australia.

On assessing key areas of various Acts and legislative provisions the BCC progressively networked with stakeholders to strive toward an acceptable level of compliance within the affected communities. Those major stakeholders included but were not limited to:

- Local authorities,
- Private certifiers,
- Industry associations,
- Private insurers,
- Building contractors,
- Home owners,
- Government agencies with a compliance charter, eg; Workplace Health and Safety,
- Professional service providers (engineers); and
- Building Codes Queensland.

Meetings were held with private certifiers and contractors working in the area to ascertain concerns with the building approval requirements in relation to disaster situations. Issues raised were referred and discussed with Building Codes Queensland, resulting in the development of a simplified, consistent interpretation of the development application and approval process. Fact sheets, guidelines and information statements were prepared and distributed to the community via the BCC.

In all, four compliance "blitzes" have been held in the cyclone affected area involving the provision of up to ten BSA building inspectors, sourced from across the State, to spot check compliance activities of builders and contractors.

These blitzes not only focussed on regulatory matters, but involved a planned approach to education of contractors on building code requirements and region specific regulations in relation to building in cyclone areas. The mention of upcoming blitzes in pre-media resulted in an increase in BCC statistics in relation to licensing queries.

### **Tarpaulins vs Roofing**

A priority of the BCC, the Task Force and State Government was the deadline for repair of roofs in the cyclone affected area due to the impending "wet" season.

BCC took control of the identification and counting of existing tarpaulins and the subsequently time consuming and detailed reporting function involved. A dedicated and strategic routine of counting and reporting was formulated. By February 2007 there were less than fifty homes under tarpaulins, the majority of whom were cash settled residents who have chosen not to repair at this stage for various reasons.

## Community Information and Communication

Providing direct support to those affected by the cyclone was a key priority for the rebuilding effort. It quickly became clear that there were many people requiring information, services and support in their attempt to rebuild their lives and homes.

It was also important to remember that when formulating a communications plan in regional areas to utilise local information points like community noticeboards, central meeting points, businesses (such as post offices), community centres and schools as vehicles for the dissemination of information. Application of media strategies utilised in metro areas will not necessarily be the most prudent methodology for smaller regional centres. A BCC Communications Strategy was formulated and provided a detailed outline of BCC's methodology in message delivery.

The BCC participated in community events hosted by other stakeholders (eg: CGU's Help Expo) but it was considered important, as a lead agency in the rebuilding and recovery process, to host events relevant to our charter which informed and educated residents as they moved through the rebuilding process.

Integral to the communication strategy were opportunities for the BCC to be informed by the cyclone-affected community and vice-versa, to assist in service planning and delivery.

From the end of April to August 2006, satellite centres were established in Mission Beach, Ravenshoe and Malanda to ensure residents in those areas had access to information and issues affecting those areas, and were recognised by BCC management.

BCC management attended various community meetings held after the event and hosted by the Task Force.

Various other methods of information dissemination were utilised including paper and web versions of the following:

- List of builders working in area (paper and web),
- BCC Guide to Rebuilding (paper and web),
- licensing and development approval requirements/information,
- referral services to specific agencies (eg: uninsured),
- weekly issues-based advice in Task Force newsletter, newspaper, radio; and
- Fact sheets (asbestos, clean ups).

The establishment of a website dedicated to building coordination was also integral to information dissemination to the general public on rebuilding matters.

Customer surveys were undertaken in August 2006 and February 2007 and these returned a high level of satisfaction from those who used the BCC's services.

## Outcomes

The desired outcomes for the BCC were:

- Informed industry and consumers,
- Greater efficiency in completing repairs,
- Reduced frustration for owners by minimising complexity and delays; and
- Greater awareness by insurers, building practitioners and regulatory authorities of the negative impacts of delays in approvals.

As themes evolved, strategies and planning techniques were adapted to recognise that various authorities had specific tasks in the recovery process.

Tasks needed to be carried out with consistency, efficiency and care. It was important not to duplicate actions already being capably addressed by other agencies.

## **Policies**

Polices were developed for consideration by the Task Force and the State Government to ensure a consistent approach. These were:

### ***Demolition Policy***

Developed to provide a co-ordinated approach for:

- demolition and removal of building materials,
- providing economies of scale,
- maintaining the communities' health and safety; and
- expedite the clean up and protect the general community's public interest.

In addition, internal BCC policies and strategies were established as follows:

- Compliance strategy,
- Uninsured project management plan,
- Communications plan; and
- Fast tracking of mutual recognition and licence applications.

## **Achievements and Milestones**

There have been many milestones and achievements for the BCC and the BSA.

The BSA personnel manning the BCC allowed for the provision of various skill levels from management, to assessment, to general clerical and customer service.

The BCC built relationships on behalf of the Task Force to inform, educate and advise other key stakeholders on building related issues and statutory requirements relative to the rebuilding process.

The BCC also developed promotional and informative material to assist the community and building industry during the rebuild.

BCC staff also assisted with the development of policy affecting rebuilding, including technical and safety aspects of the rebuilding process.

The BCC inspectors also identified and solved a myriad of issues as required on the ground to assist the community, builders and other key stakeholders. The inspectors, like all BCC staff, always strove to solve issues at the first instance out on the ground, or at the very least, help find a way forward for all parties concerned.

The development and delivery of a compliance strategy assisted the BSA, and other regulatory bodies, to identify and address non-compliance with regulations governing the building and construction industry.

The BCC established data bases for the collection and retrieval of key information relevant to its operations, and for the assistance of dissemination of information to the community.

The BCC also coordinated service providers in the delivery of key services to the cyclone affected area, such as certifiers and local authorities.

The coordination centre also allowed for the early identification of potential key issues relating to the service delivery of insurance agencies. The BCC developed strategies to encourage a more global approach from insurers in service delivery, and this ensured the legal requirements of their customers and other stakeholders were protected.

The development of a communications plan helped guide the approach and response to media, communications and community engagement.

The BCC also fostered relationships with key agencies in order to deliver outcomes in the interests of the greater community, including uninsured projects, and community engagement.

The BCC's wide-ranging media strategy served to inform the community on issues relating to the rebuilding process, for example fact sheets on asbestos and cyclone preparedness for building contractors.

## **The way ahead**

Anticipated requirements and significant issues going forward, planned activities and responses

The BCC has been recognised by General Cosgrove and the Premier as an ongoing effort in the cyclone-affected area. In December 2006 it was announced by the Premier Peter Beattie and Minister for Public Works, Housing and Information and Communication Technology, Robert Schwarten, that the BCC will remain an entity, located in Innisfail, until December 2007. The BSA will be able to then take over the building coordination activity as needed.

Rebuilding issues will continue to arise until the finalisation of building works, and issues will include the sourcing of appropriate trades, standard of work, education of contractors, media and communication. The completion of cosmetic works is expected to continue for some time.

The BCC will continue to control project coordination for residents requiring assistance to demolish significantly damaged residential buildings.

It will also continue to provide project coordination for certain categories of uninsured properties as identified by the Department of Communities. The project has continued to grow since the BCC's initial involvement, with staff being called upon for expert advice in areas not initially identified.

Clients who have previously utilised the BCC are aware of our services and will seek assistance if they encounter fresh problems in their rebuild.

The BCC will continue service delivery of advice and assistance of those in outlying areas.

The risk of future cyclones could create anxiety and uncertainty with regard to the emotional impact of potential damage from another cyclone event, as well as safety and rebuilding considerations within the general community.

The BCC will also continue to handle various issues relating to Larry, such as dealing with insurance companies; or inexperienced consumers forced into rebuilding due to the cyclone; using technically incompetent builders; and poor understanding of contracts.

The BCC will have to consider appropriate staffing – to ensure suitable skills, knowledge and resources are available to meet the demands of the community.

Significant projects will have to be taken into account by the BCC, in particular regional economic recovery projects impacting on BCC/BSA business.

On communication, the BCC will conduct ongoing monitoring of key issues and delivery of advice particular to issues arising from the cyclone-affected area and the wider community. This will include community engagement, media and communications activities, ongoing website development, marketing and strategic level public relations.

A particular focus will be on compliance and the continued delivery and maintenance of high level compliance initiatives to consolidate efforts and achievements realised to date. The compliance pilot project will assist with ensuring a high level of industry compliance and provide ongoing support with gathering statistical data for the rebuilding process.

One potential pitfall could be the loss of knowledge and expertise. With the relocation of management, local, technical and operational staff – corporate intelligence and expertise may be lost to the daily operations of the BCC office.

The BCC will have to continue to manage mediation and dispute resolution, as there may continue to be complex issues into the future.

A lesson learned from Cyclone Larry for any future BCC-style organisation is that early access to information in any future disaster can affect the rebuilding effort.

Given the three week period from Cyclone Larry to the inception of the BCC, various entities had already established a community presence and formed committees before the BCC commenced operations.

Each agency should maintain a central point of data collection for reference information crucial for the development of strategies for any future disasters.



*An example of a house in need of repair following Cyclone Larry.*

# Operation Recovery – Industry Action Groups & Industry Action Plans

## Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Soon after the cyclone, it was recognised that the recovery phase for primary production within the affected area would take years to complete – well beyond the completion of repairs to buildings and essential services.

Accordingly, General Cosgrove asked the DPI&F to coordinate the Operation Recovery - Industry Action Groups (ORIAG) consisting of eleven Industry Action Groups, comprising representatives from the major primary industry sectors. Each group was to develop an Industry Action Plan for cyclone recovery. These plans listed more than fifty recommendations which were submitted to the Queensland Government. The Government provided a response to the plans at Industry Action Group meetings in South Johnstone and Mareeba on 24 and 25 July 2006.

To provide general information on these recommendations, they have been categorised into themes:

### Labour

#### **Recommendations**

All industries impacted by Cyclone Larry identified a scarcity of labour as a major issue. Clean-up activities were very labour intensive, and a common complaint was that the local workforce was not large enough.

All industries suffering a break in cash-flow called for an extension of wage subsidy programs to ensure workers did not leave the region. Calls to increase the length of the arrangement ranged from an additional thirteen weeks to one year. Some industries called for increases in the value of the subsidy and others requested changes to the subsidy programs to include contractors.

Some industries with skilled labour requirements (especially aquaculture and fisheries) were particularly concerned that the break in production would see them lose skilled workers, thus imposing the cost of training new staff when production came back online.

Additionally, damage to accommodation had caused some workers from all industries to leave the region. Moreover, damage to temporary workers' accommodation caused shortages in casual labour (e.g. backpackers) both for the clean-up and at harvest time, which could cause large problems in some industries.

#### **Government response**

- The Australian Government announced an extension of the wage subsidy program from thirteen weeks to twenty six weeks.
- The Queensland Government introduced the Community Jobs Program to provide incentives for local labourers to remain in the area.
- Innisfail TAFE was engaged to address skills in the aquaculture industry, although it was recognised that such action is necessarily a longer term response.

## Debris cleanup

### Recommendations

All cropping industries asked for assistance to remove debris from productive land. Many areas could not be re-established while debris remained. Flooding from the cyclone has caused erosion and damage to riparian areas which many industries feel poses a threat to productivity and the environment, and may increase the likelihood of flooding in the future.

### Government response

- Operation Farm Clear was established, jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments through the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA). Almost 1000 properties have had debris removed and fencelines repaired through the program, which utilised workers from the Community Jobs Program. Cost to date has been \$8.6 million, with \$6.4 million funded through NDRA and \$2.2 million through the Community Jobs Program. Work through Operation Farm Clear is now mostly complete, with specialist contractors still undertaking debris removal activities on farm forestry land.
- DPI&F coordinated a working party to examine the risk of waterway debris in future flooding events, and the legal constraints to clearing in riparian areas. The working party identified that this work was best undertaken by the Department of Natural Resources and Water, and a \$4.5 million program was established to undertake this activity. Work under this program is ongoing.

## Financial and taxation

### Recommendations

All industries suffering a break in cash-flow called for an extension of income support to business owners. All cropping industries specifically asked for assistance with re-planting crops or in the re-establishment of orchards, while many asked for other inputs to production to be subsidised (e.g. fuel, freight costs for transporting inputs from other regions, feed for livestock).

Tax alleviation, whether through income averaging, tax reductions or a moratorium on local government rate increases, had been widely requested.

Many industries have noted the demand for financial advice regarding business strategies. Some industries have requested a consideration of a government underwritten insurance scheme to protect against cyclone damage in the future.

### Government response

- The enhanced NDRA arrangements put in place for Cyclone Larry were unprecedented, including business grants of up to \$25,000, and enhanced Cyclone Larry loans from QRAA. Loans are still available to primary producers of up to \$500,000, including twenty five percent of the loan being provided as a grant (to a maximum of \$50,000). The remaining seventy five percent of the loan is repayable over ten years at an interest rate of four percent, with the first two years of the loan interest free and no payments required. These grants and loans represent substantial assistance for reestablishment.
- Standard NDRA freight subsidies were made available to a maximum of \$5000.

- The Australian Tax Office offered a range of assistance such as fast tracking of refunds, extending debt payment and lodgment obligation time frames, and help in reconstruction of lost/destroyed tax records.
- DPI&F has expanded farm financial counselling services in the region, and Department of State Development (DSD) Officers were available to meet with affected businesses on-site for one-on-one business consultations to help assess their situation, ensure appropriate emergency and departmental services have been accessed, provide relevant referrals and discuss business recovery options. DSD also provided Business Recovery Plan assistance to affected businesses to undertake medium to long term planning for recovery.

## Environmental and natural resource management

### **Recommendations**

The main environmental concern of industries was the management of weeds in the affected areas. Cyclone damage to the natural environment and extensive flooding may provide an opportunity for weeds to spread and establish in new areas. Other concerns related to restoring vegetation corridors, riparian zone, natural wind-breaks, coastal buffers and fish habitats.

### **Government response**

- As noted above, Operation Farm Clear and the waterway debris clearing program were established to address many of these issues.

## Fencing

### **Recommendations**

The beef and dairy industries called for a change in the policy regarding fence lines, specifically an increase in the cleared area around fences so that machinery can be used to quickly clear debris and repair damage, as well as reducing potential fire threats in one operation. This will also minimise future fence damage from cyclones/storms.

### **Government response**

- Depending on land classification, producers are able to obtain specific exemptions for land clearing under the Land Act 1994.

## Miscellaneous

### **Recommendations**

- Most industries have explicitly called for preparedness plans for future natural disasters.
- Many have called for additional personal counselling services.
- A common request is for additional DPI&F extension staff to be made available for consultation regarding agronomic, disease and pest management expertise.
- Industry wanted Government to ensure that the return to banana production did not result in a glut in early 2007.
- Infrastructure repair is considered important to many industries.
- Some industries have expressed concern over difficulties in abiding by legislation regarding NRM requirements and vaccination schedules.
- Animal welfare issues should receive priority in insurance assessments.

### **Government response**

- Industry Action groups were encouraged to continue meeting to develop preparedness plans, with administrative support provided by DPI&F.
- Industry Action Plans are to be incorporated into the State's disaster management arrangements. Dialogue for Action forums (involving industry) are to be incorporated into future immediate response strategies.
- An additional two Farm Financial Counsellors have been appointed to the area.
- Four additional Industry Development Officers have been appointed to the area.
- While Government was not prepared to mandate nurse suckering to delay return to production in the banana industry, the banana Industry Action Group, working with DPI&F developed a proposal to stagger the recovery of banana plantations through selectively 'nurse-suckering' a portion of the crop. Approximately 30 percent of the plantations were nurse-suckered, and as the industry returned to full production in January 2007, only a slight oversupply occurred and carton prices remained relatively close to the cost of production around \$15 to \$18 per carton.
- Required vaccination schedules are a necessary part of livestock production and ensure Biosecurity is maintained.
- Insurance Council of Australia has undertaken to provide appropriate consideration of animal welfare issues when prioritising assessments in future disaster events.

## **Secondary and Tertiary Industry**

### **Recommendations**

The secondary and tertiary industries have raised a number of these issues, but also have raised other issues including:

- Regional promotional strategies
- Exploring new market opportunities
- Promoting business skills and recovery planning
- Help with alternative suppliers.

### **Government response**

- The Strategic Industry Directions Forum has incorporated this issue into the Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy, administered by DSD.

## **Tourism**

### **Recommendations**

A major issue facing the tourism industry is customer perceptions of the attractiveness of the region post-cyclone. A Tourism Recovery Action Plan had been prepared and the industry sought ORIAG support for it. The industry also recommended early action to restore all road signage in the area.

### **Government response**

- The Strategic Industry Directions Forum has incorporated this issue into the Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy, administered by DSD.

# Insurance Industry Summary

## Background

Representation of the Insurance Industry on the Cyclone Larry Operation Recovery Task Force headed by General Cosgrove provided a clear and empowered link for insurance matters relevant to the recovery effort to be actioned, reported and resolved in a coordinated fashion through the Insurance Council to those insurance companies managing claims in the nine Larry-affected shires in Far North Queensland.

The Queensland Government appointed John Mulcahy to the Task Force in late April, 2006 to represent the Insurance Industry.

Having the insurance industry represented on the Task Force enabled:-

- potential gaps with insurance industry and Task Force to be bridged;
- insurance issues to be understood at Task Force level;
- insurance issues to be effectively actioned through the Insurance Council and its members;
- protected the industry's reputation;
- recognised the important role general insurance plays in natural recovery disasters.

The experience from the Cyclone Larry Task Force has been valuable in the creation of the Insurance Council of Australia's Catastrophe Coordination Arrangements which has replaced the former Insurance Disaster Response Organisation.

This effort was planned and executed in support of the tremendous work insurance companies had themselves already undertaken to manage claims and help drive recovery effort in the Larry- affected areas. That work had already started in earnest from 20 March 2007.

## Task Force Support

The industry was thus able to provide substantial coordinated support for the Task Force's objectives in a variety of ways.

These included:

- concise and regular aggregated statistical reporting to Task Force on insurers' rebuilding effort;
- arranging for Insurance Council member companies to appoint and empower capable senior managers dedicated to managing Larry claims (Larry Managers) who also acted as the member company's prime contact for all Larry-related matters;
- forming the Insurance Action Group to operationalise industry issues, comprising Larry Managers from those companies with substantial numbers of Larry-related insurance claims, Insurance Council secretariat representatives, QBSA and BCC representatives and chaired by the QBSA. This group met in either Brisbane or Innisfail as required;
- helping create and drive the "Virtuous circle" of BCC advisors, IOS local representative and members' senior Larry Managers to fast-track effectively and efficiently insurance customer's enquiries or complaints to the BCC, IOS, Task Force office or other source;
- coordinating industry support for the Rebuilding Expo in Innisfail on 8 & 9 July 2007 by way of companies manning customer enquiry booths, organising panels of industry representatives to speak on claims process, avoiding under-insurance

- providing industry representation at various Forums held in Innisfail and with builders and tradespeople;
- supporting and helping the Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal committee with under-insured's' claims;
- presenting the industry's view at the Queensland Government's Cyclone Summit in Cairns in December 2007 and participating in various workshops;
- coordinating insurers' efforts in successfully achieving the Task Force's challenge to repair Larry insured's' domestic roofs by 1 December 2006, ahead of the new wet season.

## Cyclone recovery

Whilst insurers tackled Larry claims management in a variety of ways best suited to their customers' needs, the industry overall responded very well to the significant challenges Cyclone Larry's damage presented, including the ongoing challenge of rain and wet conditions which severely constrained building recovery effort in the Larry-affected communities through most of March-August 2006.

The insurance industry responded to 27,092 domestic claims totalling \$365.1 million in insured losses (as at 19 February 2007).

## Lessons learnt

All insurers involved have learnt from the Larry recovery effort and have subsequently implemented improvements in process with such matters as claims triage and categorisation, use of engineer and assessor support, use of super tarpaulins for all-weather building work and on the ground communication with customers.

Insurers in the main have gone to the margin and beyond in helping their Larry-affected customers' claims, irrespective of those being domestic building or contents or more sophisticated commercial claims.

In turn, the Insurance Council has workshopped experiences from Larry with key members and consulted with the Task Force on ways to improve industry effort and has taken those into account in developing a new industry disaster management response plan. This plan was formally released to the Queensland and Australian Government and other stakeholders in January 2007.

Larry-related claims have clearly showed 3 key issues:-

1. Many insured dwellings were in a poor state of repair and maintenance, exacerbated by local conditions encouraging rot, mildew and termite activity.
2. Damage to many insured dwellings was directly caused or worsened because of unsafe or illegal structures erected without proper local authority building approval.
3. Many insured's were under-insured, relative to their policy cover and the damage to and replacement cost of their dwellings.
4. Insurers are addressing the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue via more innovative covers available in the market, providing simple online and paper tools to help customers calculate cover needed, and constant reminders through renewal notices and marketing material to their customers to regularly review adequacy of cover.

However the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> issues need the diligent efforts of those insured and the Larry-affected communities as a whole to constantly monitor and solve.

# Independent Insurance Advisors

## Background

Drawing on the experiences of the Bushfire Recovery Task Force set up following the January 2003 Canberra fires, a decision was taken following the establishment of the Cyclone Larry Operation Recovery Task Force to include roles of Independent Advisors on Insurance. This decision was taken notwithstanding established mechanisms within the insurance industry and that industry's disputes resolution processes. A source of meaningful advice at arms length from the industry was seen as important.

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner in Queensland was approached to recruit a suitable operative, with a view towards a continuous full time presence in the cyclone-affected area throughout the recovery process. Two members were identified for this purpose and consequently agreed to work on a fortnightly rotational basis.

The two retired insurance executives, appointed by the Insurance Commissioner's Office brought to the Task Force not only senior insurance management insights with national perspectives but detailed experience of Queensland regional conditions and building codes. Between them they brought 70+years experience in the industry, past Presidency of the Insurance Institute and Chairmanship of the Insurance Council Panel in Queensland. Significantly, each had headed the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel within their company, demonstrating an awareness of commercial realities as well as technical interpretative skills.

The Independent Insurance Advisors met with General Cosgrove on Monday 3rd April in Innisfail and attended a later meeting in Cairns which included representatives from Queensland Building Services Authority (QBSA) general management, Insurers, the Insurance Disaster Response Organisation (IDRO), the Insurance Ombudsman, loss adjusters, council representatives, workplace health and safety, Master Builders Assoc (MBA), HIA, building certifiers and engineers.

The General outlined his expectations of the Insurance Industry, the Advisors spoke of their role and the General Manager of the QBSA outlined discussions held with the four Local Authorities in the area affected by Cyclone Larry. The QBSA had prepared for distribution guidelines which the 4 Councils were adopting concerning the requirement for building approvals (except where self assessment was allowed in instances of minor structural damage).

General Cosgrove announced the pending establishment of a Building Coordination Centre (BCC) in Innisfail under the direction of QBSA; designed to fast-track building approval processes and to deal with resourcing issues associated with the rebuilding task.

The advisors were located from the outset in the BCC and the co-location with the QBSA proved to be enormously beneficial, as advisors had immediate access to detailed building advice and inspectorial services and advisors in turn were able to give QBSA staff insights into insurance aspects and attitudes. The appointees shared the position, rotating duties and visits to Innisfail.

QBSA management continued to co-ordinate follow up meetings with the insurance industry during the formative months following the cyclone and these proved to be a most effective way of ensuring all involved knew what was required concerning building approvals, licensing of contractors and the like.

## Cyclone recovery

Soon after the event, insurance advisors drafted the text of the Queensland Government produced Brochure "Homeowners Insurance ...The facts you need to know "; 10,000 of which were distributed to households in the affected area.

Advisors were regular contributors to the Operation Recovery Newsletter and played their part in ABC Radio discussion programs speaking about insurance matters of topical interest.

The advisors also attended and offered advice at public forums in Atherton, Babinda, Innisfail, Malanda, Mission Beach, Silkwood and South Mission Beach.

In the 10 months from the time of the cyclone until this report was compiled in early February 2007; Advisors assisted 451 individuals on insurance issues dealing with 563 matters. Some people experienced difficulties in a number of areas. Aspects of some cases were reopened a number of times.

During this period there were 4 phases; the time immediately following the cyclone until 30 June 2006, the next 3 months to 30 September 2006, then until the Christmas break 2006 for the trades and, fourthly, the time following resumption in the New Year.

The 563 items of concern were divided as follows:-

Inadequate communication by an assessor	51	9.1%
Delays by the assessor	37	6.6%
Inadequate communication by the insurer	17	3.0%
Delays by the insurer	41	7.3%
Questions on adequacy of Scope of Works	101	17.9%
Concerns at the settlement offer	77	13.7%
Matters of policy interpretation/exclusions	74	13.1%
Delays by consultants/engineers	26	4.6%
Disputes with findings of consultants/engineers	27	4.8%
Delays by builders	33	5.9%
Contractual issues with builders	24	4.3%
Workmanship issues with builders	30	5.3%
Disputes with the builder	25	4.4%
	563	100%

## Phase 1 20/3/2006 – 30/6/2007

Phase one was epitomised by rain, rain and heavier rain, which had the natural affect of slowing things down. Despite this there was feverish activity by assessors in particular, who were able to recommend settlements for many contents claims and were able to categorise most of the building claims.

Building claims fell into 3 categories,	Minor structural or roof damage at worst
	Major roof or structural damage
	Extensive Damage; not economic to Repair

Given that repairs in the 1st category could proceed without a Building Approval (BA), assessors were able to organise for repair quotations in these cases.

Insurers engaged building consultants or engineers to help categorise marginal cases, to comment where more extensive damage was latently discovered during minor repairs and to determine issues of causation when aging, rust, rot or white-ant activity were significant or where lack of maintenance was an issue. While all the above issues are policy exclusions, Insurers in the majority of cases allowed some latitude.

There were very few consulting engineers with insurance related experience available in the affected area and ambient work levels precluded some of these from becoming involved. This caused a major delay factor only partly addressed by the 'importation' of consulting engineers from Brisbane and interstate. The volumes evident meant that most available resources were directed to categorisation. Rather than providing the engineering drawings and detailed scope of works ultimately to support the BA required for Category 2. At first pass the 'imported' engineers were able only to provide broadly based items to attend, suggesting that more detail would be produced on follow-up. Claimants testy at the delay in having the engineer come in the first place lost patience when they learned that a follow-up had to be scheduled.

Whilst assessors contributed to 15.7% of cases overall, it is not surprising that they caused 25% of the angst in the first phase when their activity was at its height.

It is interesting to note that very few of the 563 matters raised with the Independent Insurance Advisors related to Contents insurance issues.

The lack of knowledge of front end staff in some Insurance companies is a concern. This showed up various times with Insureds having their claim refused and policy cancelled for failing to disclose facts that were immaterial and in no way affected the claim. The Insurance Advisors knowledge of the Insurance Contracts Act (1984) became vital in these cases. To their credit insurance management quickly rectified any such errors once brought to their attention.

The underinsurance problem most evident with category 3 building damage was often exacerbated by the nature of the homes insured. Many were destined for demolition and, while the sum insured was exhausted quickly, the 10% additional benefit for removal of debris often proved inadequate where asbestos sheeting was used on roofs and wall-linings. Special requirements and safeguards relative to the removal, sealing, transportation and dumping of asbestos waste virtually doubled the demolition costs in cases where asbestos was evident.

## Phase two

Phase two up to 6 months out from the event. People's attention focussed on insurers. Insurers were perceived to have been the cause of delays, poor communication, avoiding return of phone calls and were seen to be toughening stances on policy interpretation, settlement offers and the like. During this phase people citing insurers and their determinations represented 61.1% of all attendances. It is significant also that landlords with many rental properties were disproportionately represented in attendances during this phase and often their cause for concern was insurers' attitudes to lack of maintenance and to general poor pre-cyclone condition of properties.

At one end of the spectrum, when advisors established that people's cases, particularly those of elderly people, had fallen between the cracks; they sought (with one or two notable exceptions) and received the assistance of Insurers in reviewing matters swiftly.

Conversely, when faced with people of advanced business acumen, not really seeking advice but looking instead for support in spreading the envelope, advisors limited their involvement in many such cases to a view on policy interpretation. Advice on the disputes resolution processes available and direction towards the IOS was provided. Only then would enquirers in this category proffer that they had been to see the Insurance Ombudsman Service representative where they had been told the same thing.

## Phase three

Phase three (October till Christmas 2006) saw the emergence of consultant/engineers as a disproportionate cause for concern, not so much because of the delays and incomplete reporting previously mentioned, but because policy holders challenged the way some engineers went about their (sometimes allegedly cursory) inspections and any unfavourable outcomes.

Whilst consultants contributed to 9.4% of matters raised overall; during the third phase this rose to 13%. Most insurers pointed out that insurers were depending on the professional competence, expertise and independence of these consultants. Reports were sought to enable insurers to make valued determinations on policy liability or scope of work issues.

Nevertheless, as a general rule, insurers were not averse to insureds obtaining a second opinion. Insurers offered to repay customers outlays on the second report in the event the second engineer was able to demonstrably attribute a wider scope of works to cyclone causation. Behind the scenes they may have revisited the situation with the 1st consultant.

Insurers were generally averse to insureds asking insurers to arrange pre-emptive reports just in case there might be unseen damage. Insurers pointed out that if no relevant damage was found (or outcomes were substantially the same as 1st reported), the engineers account would be directed to the principal who caused the engagement to be made i.e. the insured.

Homes built to the building code revised in relation to wind loadings in this area from 1981 (and adopted Statewide from 1985) withstood the affects of the cyclone remarkable well. Many went totally unscathed. This is not to say that all homes built to the 'new' code escaped damage, nor that homes built in a previous era were not well built. However the resultant damage to older homes was, in general, much more pronounced than for newer homes; not only because of the asbestos and wind loading issues referred to earlier but exacerbated by difficulties in accessing or matching older materials and profiles, incompatibility of materials (eg galvanised iron and zincalum) and general deterioration through aging, rot, rust etc.

From the end of October and throughout the 4th phase it became apparent that issues with builders had become top of mind. While builder issues have brought about less than 20% of cases overall to date, more than 30% of cases of late have involved builder issues. Delays, perceptions of poor workmanship, contractual issues and disputes about appointments and continuing conflicts have all contributed. So too have been issues where builders, including those selected by insurers (inducing General Insurance Code of Practice 3.13 implications), have not given cognizance to the requirements of the Domestic Building Contracts Act 2000 nor legislated requirements in respect of QBSA Warranty Insurance. Also of note was the unearthing of unregistered builders being used, perhaps unwittingly, by insurers and the suspension of the licence of one builder favoured by one adjuster.

The following table summarises the consumer consultancy matters dealt with by advisors:

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Total
Assessors	48 (25%)	22	15	3	88 (15.6%)
Insurers	104	138 (61%)	52	16	310 (55.1%)
Consultants	18	19	15 (13%)	1	53 (9.4%)
Builders	23	47	33	9 (31%)	112 (19.9%)
Total	193 (100%)	226(100%)	115(100%)	29(100%)	563(100%)

The way various insurers went about dealing with the cyclone situation is quite informative.

- From the very outset; one insurer, in deference to its more elderly client base, insisted that panel assessors have clients contacted once a fortnight, if only to say that there were delays, but the client hadn't been forgotten. That insurer established a temporary shopfront in a prominent location in Innisfail and appointed a consumer consultant. The consumer consultant was a retired former State Manager of the company who was authorised to sort any problems. Cases referred from the shopfront, from the claims handling centre in Melbourne and claimants with larger claims cold canvassed from a data-base were addressed; meaning the company was able to stay ahead of most problems. The consumer consultant kept regular contact with Insurance Advisors throughout, and immediately addressed matters raised here. Needless to say, enquiries from clients of that company were proportionately much less frequent than the company's market share suggested.
- Another insurer established a claims management centre in Innisfail about 3 months after the storm. Clients were allocated individual case managers, who were available for clients to raise issues with face to face in Innisfail. That Company also had a consumer consultant on the road authorised to deal with contentious issues. The company also established a specialist building consultancy firm in the centre to give technical advice to case managers; to quantity survey, assess and approve competing builder's quotes and project manager works being carried out by builders; to provide engineering expertise etc. Again the consumer consultant from that company made a practice of visiting Insurance Advisors to advise on the course of action and progress on any matters referred. Although it was not over-represented relative to market share in the first place, there was a remarkable reduction in cases here for that company once the centre was established.

- Yet another company (with strong sugar industry connections, a large domestic portfolio augmented by wide commercial insurance exposures and relationships with local brokers) was even quicker to establish a local disaster claims centre supported by an in-house assessing team headed by a person with appropriate delegated authority.
- Another insurer used the resources of an in-house assessing team on the scene and an established panel of builders. Builders were required to set a firm start date and give an estimated completion date and fortnightly updates on progress for each contract. Very few enquiries arose here for that insurer and the proportion of its claims finalised to date is remarkably high.
- Whilst these models have proved to be effective, they contrast with the other end of the spectrum – which chose not to establish an effective local presence and had clients rely on long distance phone calls to assessors. Those assessors were often domiciled interstate and proved to be disinclined to return phone calls let alone return to North Queensland with regularity. They had a penchant to use southern builders who demonstrably had scant regard for Queensland QBSA and Domestic Building Contracts Legislation.

A number of features were common to poorly performing insurers, where by:-

- they either overlooked timeframes contemplated in Part 3 of the General Insurance Code of Practice or did not take responsibility for the inactions of service providers in this regard;
- their disillusioned clients sought assistance from insurance advisors outweighed their market presence;
- it was common to find defensive claims staff whose co-operation with insurance advisors contrasted starkly with their mainstream contemporaries; and
- they have been at the forefront in attracting adverse media interest.

## The way ahead

The resource issue with consulting engineers needs to be addressed and a way needs to be found to fast-track engineer's specifications, drawings and scope of works for repairable homes where a BA is required.

Insurers could be well served in developing a better strategy to deal with older buildings: their condition, material availability, asbestos, removal of debris.

Whilst advisors invariably sought the permission of insureds to enquire of insurers on their behalf, privacy issues may be an impediment to the efficiency of independent advisors in the future. These cases would prospectively involve the IOS for instance.

Insurers may wish to review their claims handling model to ensure appropriate levels of client service, including effective communication can be delivered in any future major event.

Underinsurance was a major issue and in many cases this was brought about by the increased cost of repairs that surface in times of natural disasters.

# Insurance Ombudsman Service

The Insurance Ombudsman Service (IOS) is a national service which assists in resolving disputes between consumers and insurers that are participating companies. The service will also assist with enquiries about general insurance.

The service is free and is an independent. Decisions made by the Insurance Ombudsman are only binding on the participating company and not the consumers.

Due to the immense devastation caused by Cyclone Larry the IOS deemed that it could play an important role in assisting with the recovery by having a representative located in the area. Accordingly Mr Vince Wass was appointed as a Consumer Consultant and commenced in Innisfail on the 18th April 2006.

Up until 20 March 2007 the IOS customer consultant had conducted 712 consultations which includes multiple visits by some insureds. There are 14 outstanding claims which are mainly of a complex nature and require a concentrated effort in order to expedite.

As time progresses the consultations are becoming more difficult and emotions and frustrations are playing a significant part due to the unresolved issues.

The major categories of contacts are as follows:

ature of enquiries & complaints	Percentages
Lack of communication	21
Delay in repairs	26
Awaiting engineers report	3
Insurance claims process/entitlement enquiries	27
Dissatisfaction with assessors attitude	3
Dissatisfaction with appointment of builder	4
Dissatisfaction with offer of settlement	16
Dispute with broker	0

The predominant categories of complaint at present are –

- Lack of communication
- Delay in repairs
- Insurance claims process/ entitlement enquiries
- Dissatisfaction with offer of settlement

# Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal

The Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal was established on 20 March 2007 by the Premier of Queensland, the Honourable Peter Beattie MP, as an immediate response to the devastating affects of the cyclone.

The Australian public and business community responded with unprecedented generosity, with donations received through telephone pledges, banks and fundraising events.

The response has been overwhelming. One year on, over \$22 million has been donated to help relieve the suffering and distress caused by the cyclone.

The Queensland and Australian Governments donated \$1.1 million each to the Appeal Fund, with other State and local Governments making significant contributions. Major corporate donors have also made an enormous contribution, with countless Australian households digging deep to help those in need.

Disbursement of the Appeal Fund has been overseen by a Distribution Committee chaired by the Honourable Terry Mackenroth. The other members of the Distribution Committee are:

- The Honourable Warren Pitt MP, Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Seniors and Youth
- Mr Alan Clayton, Red Cross Australia, Queensland Chairman
- Mr Neil Clarke, former Mayor, Johnstone Shire Council
- Mr Peter Searston, Area Manager, Central North Queensland Region, Centrelink
- Mr Brian Sheehan, Regional Director Northern, Department of Housing

Executive support for the Distribution Committee has been provided by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. All administrative costs involved with the Appeal Fund have been met by the Department to ensure that the donated monies are applied singularly to the Cyclone affected region. Similarly, all interest earnt by the Appeal Fund is applied to assist cyclone victims.

The Distribution Committee has adopted a measured and responsible approach to distributing assistance, balancing the difficult task of responding swiftly to community need while ensuring the appropriate checks and balances to safeguard the integrity of the fund.

The first round of payments from the Appeal Fund commenced on Anzac Day 2006, to assist families whose homes had become uninhabitable as a result of the cyclone.

The Distribution Committee determined at an early date to focus the Appeal Fund on the critical need of repairing structural damage to owner occupied residences. The Appeal Fund has had a significant impact on the rebuild effort, being applied equitably to both insured and uninsured applicants. The cooperative approach of both the Department of Communities and the insurance industry has ensured a coordinated and informed response to the repair of homes.

Subsequent funding rounds have provided assistance to repair the facilities of not-for-profit community organisations, and address the continuing hardship experienced by individuals as a result of the cyclone.

At the anniversary of the cyclone, \$18m of the Appeal Fund has been allocated by the Distribution Committee. The Committee will continue to apply the balance of the Appeal Fund to the cyclone affected community.

Upon completion of the Distribution Committee's work a comprehensive report on disbursements from the Appeal Fund will be provided to the Premier to table in the Queensland Parliament. In addition, the Queensland Auditor-General will review and report on the operation of the Appeal Fund.

## Assistance Schemes – Tropical Cyclone Larry

Assistance Measure	Eligibility	Responsible Agency
Emergent Assistance Grants:  Up to \$150 per individual or \$700 per family.	Persons facing genuine hardship – immediate short term needs such as food, accommodation, medical supplies and clothing.  Amount is deducted from any further assistance that the person may be eligible for.	Department of Communities
Essential Household Contents Assistance:  Maximum assistance payable is \$1500 for an individual and \$4500 for a couple or family.	Assistance towards the replacement and repair of essential household items lost, damaged or destroyed in a disaster. The grants are a contribution only towards the costs of damaged essential items, set amounts per item and overall maximum benefit limit applies. Eligibility is subject to income and assets tests. Property must be owned by the person claiming and uninsured.  Amount is deducted from any further assistance that the person may be eligible for.	Department of Communities
Repairs to Dwellings (Structural Grants):  Maximum grant \$17,000 for individual or \$20,000 for a couple or family	The grants are a contribution only towards the costs of repair of owner/occupied, uninsured residences to the point of being safe, habitable and secure.  Eligibility is only if the person who owns the property lives in the property at the time of the disaster and it is their principal place of residence. Income and asset test apply. Any previous payments received under Emergent Assistance Grant or Essential Household Contents Assistance Grants must be deducted from this grant.	Department of Communities
Associations Natural Disaster Relief Scheme: Concessional loans and grants to Churches, Clubs, Sporting Associations and other Voluntary Non Profit Organisations for re-establishment costs.	Must have sustained substantial damage as a direct result of the natural disaster and is limited to the cost of restoration of the organisations assets pre-damage standard.  Assistance is by way of a combination of loan and grant up to maximum amounts of \$100,000 loan and \$5,000 grant for any one application. The first \$30,000 (or part thereof) of assistance provided by way of loan and grant in the ratio 5:1. An aggregate loan ceiling of \$150,000 also applies to each borrower. A maximum initial repayment term of seven years.  Eligible projects include – restoration of damaged club rooms, grand stands, playing fields, shower blocks, sporting equip and facilities. Loss of revenue or replacement of damaged liquor or food is NOT eligible.	Department of Communities

Assistance Measure	Eligibility	Responsible Agency
Mortgage Relief Scheme which provides interest free mortgage relief loans of up to \$12,000	Mortgage Relief Assistance was available to people that experienced either a loss of income or significant repair costs which reduced their capacity to meet their monthly mortgage repayments. Mortgage Relief provides a mortgage repayment subsidy (to cover any mortgage cost that exceeds 30% of monthly income) or assistance to clear home loan or rates arrears.	Department of Housing
Rent moratorium	Rent moratorium for long term social housing tenants was provided for a period of 28 days from 20 March 2006 to 17 April 2006.	Department of Housing
Assistance for Department of Housing home loan clients	The department provided a range of assistance options to department loan clients. The assistance was assessed on a case by case basis but included temporary reductions in monthly loan repayments, the waiving of lease payments for Rental Purchase Plan agreements and a moratorium on arrears action for clients in the cyclone-affected region.	Department of Housing
Relief arrangements for clients with a Bond loan debt	The assistance provided to Bond Loan clients included the provision of additional loans to clients with an existing Bond Loan to allow them to obtain alternate accommodation and the temporary suspension of Bond Loan collection action in the cyclone-affected region.	Department of Housing
Concessional loans to needy persons for home rebuilding or substitute purchase	This loan is means tested. The net cost of repairs, rebuilding, or substitute purchase is abated relative to financial circumstances of applicant. The applicant's net realisable assets must be insufficient to repair or rebuild the residence without undue hardship. Applicant must be unable to obtain the finance necessary from normal sources of housing finance and must be able to provide first mortgage security.  The loan will not exceed \$100 000.	Department of Communities
Employment Assistance – Commonwealth	A wage subsidy for businesses, including farmers, of \$400 a fortnight for each equivalent full-time position for a period of 13 weeks.  The National Harvest Labour Information Service worked closely with farmers and displaced agricultural workers to provide a central coordinating point for sourcing labour in the affected area.  In conjunction with the Queensland Government, funding for free daily bus or train services from Cairns to Innisfail and the surrounding region for three months for those forced to travel from temporary accommodation back to their homes and communities.	Australian Government

Assistance Measure	Eligibility	Responsible Agency
Employment Assistance – State	<p>Community Jobs Program – employment for up to six months to up to 1000 local displaced residents to assist with the reconstruction of public assets and debris clean-up.</p> <p>Assistance for workers displaced from industries other than primary industries unable to provide alternative employment due to a lack of skills in demand eligible for up to \$5,000 assistance in job preparation, training and wage subsidies under the Worker Assistance Program.</p> <p>Subsidies to enable local councils to employ additional trainees.</p> <p>\$240,000 to the Queensland Farmers' Federation to fund four Relief Coordinators to work with producers and State and Federal agencies to implement assistance measures. In addition \$120,000 provided to the Australian Banana Growers Council to employ two Labour Coordinators to assist producers secure an adequate supply of labour.</p>	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
Ex-gratia Payments \$1,000 per eligible adult \$400 per eligible child under 16 years	One-off non-taxable, non means-tested payment to people unable to live in their main home because it has been destroyed, with no power and/or water, and uninhabitable or inaccessible for two weeks or longer.	Centrelink

Assistance Measure	Eligibility	Responsible Agency
<p><b>Business Assistance Fund - Tax Free Grants</b> \$10,000 or \$25,000</p> <p><b>Income Support for Farmers and Small Business</b></p>	<p>Tax-free grants for registered small and home-based businesses, including farmers of \$10,000 or \$25,000 depending on the extent of costs or loss.</p> <p>To help businesses with immediate restocking, replanting and cleanup activities. To be eligible for this assistance, businesses must be located in the area declared by the Queensland Government as a natural disaster area, be adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Larry, and have an Australian Business Number.</p> <p>Income support for farmers and small business owners who employ not more than the equivalent of 20 people full-time and whose income has been adversely affected by Cyclone Larry.</p> <p>Fortnightly payment, equivalent to the Newstart Allowance rate, for a period of up to six months. Payments taxable.</p> <p>No asset test in relation to the capital value of their farm or business assets.</p>	Centrelink
<p><b>Fuel Excise Relief Business, including Farmers</b> - \$560 per month (based on \$20 per day)</p> <p><b>Households</b> - \$280 per month (based on \$10 per day)</p>	One-off generator fuel subsidy program where payments are made monthly in advance to farmers, businesses and households generating their own electricity until normal services restored.	Centrelink
<b>Generator Hire</b>	<p>Assistance to dairy farms and aquaculture businesses without power as a result of damage suffered due to Cyclone Larry.</p> <p>Assistance for costs associated with hiring a generator available where electricity needed to operate equipment that is required to relieve livestock distress and maintain the life of cows and fish and other aquatic organisms. To help dairy farmers operate milking machines and aquaculture businesses operate pumps, filters and cold rooms.</p> <p>This assistance is in addition to the fuel excise relief available to households and businesses without electricity and using a generator as a result of the impact of Cyclone Larry.</p>	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
<b>Concessional Loan for Farmers and Small Business</b>	<p>A loan and grant assistance package of up to \$200,000 for primary producers to assist them to recover from the effects of Cyclone Larry. In special cases, consideration given to a total assistance package of up to \$500,000.</p> <p>Non-repayable grant component of up to 25 per cent of the assistance package, up to a maximum of \$50,000. Assistance is interest and repayment free for the first two years and no government fees or charges. In the third year, an interest rate of 4 per cent commences. Repayment term up to nine years.</p>	Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority

Assistance Measure	Eligibility	Responsible Agency
Freight subsidy scheme	Freight subsidy schemes for primary producers in the event that assistance is required to freight building materials, stock, fodder or machinery following a disaster event.	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Operation Farm Clear	Assistance to primary producers with the removal of debris from farms impacted by Cyclone Larry which aids in the re-establishment of essential property infrastructure and restore profitable operations.	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Primary Industries Cyclone Recovery Advice Service.	Centres established to provide specialist advisors, financial advice, assistance with QRAA applications, recovery advice for orchard and crop industries, biosecurity services as well as scientific advice for tree crops, sugar cane and banana crops.	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Industry Development Officers	Strategically located industry development officers providing guidance and advice to aid industry recovery and future farm modelling to enable primary producers to be more resilient to cyclones.  The officers also facilitate with the primary industries to include risk management strategies which will be implemented as part of their Industry Recovery Plans developed following TCL.	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
Financial Institutions	All major financial institutions provided special disaster relief and assistance packages to support their customers affected by Cyclone Larry. Assistance included a range of measures such as cash and other support to assist both individuals and businesses.	Financial Institutions
Taxation Assistance	Fast-tracking of refunds, extending debt payment and lodgement obligation timeframes, and help in reconstruction of lost/destroyed tax records	Australian Taxation Office
Restoration of Essential Public Assets	Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) funding for restoration of essential public assets to pre-disaster standard.	Emergency Management Queensland
Counter Disaster Operations Expenditure	NDRA reimbursement of eligible extraordinary disaster management expenditure incurred by state agencies and local governments and private property debris clearing.	Emergency Management Queensland

<b>Department of State Development Trade and Innovation Financial Assistance Schemes most suitable for recovery and redevelopment of businesses and regional economic development activity (schemes existing prior to Cyclone Larry)</b>		
Queensland Industry Development Scheme  Minimum: \$5000  Maximum: generally \$50,000 but can exceed this  Leadership and Management Program  Maximum: \$5,000 - \$15,000 depending on type of project	<p>Assists eligible businesses to implement growth-generating projects which will leverage increased sales, employment, exports and investment into their businesses.</p> <p>The Leadership and Management Program is available to Queensland-based trade and industry associations, clusters and business groups to deliver programs that develop the leadership and management skills of their small business member.</p>	Department of State Development
Regional Business Development Scheme	Provides assistance to develop regional business opportunities that contribute to the economic diversification of industry and employment opportunities in regional Queensland.	Department of State Development
Cyclone Larry Special - Regional Business Development Scheme	<p>This program was specifically designed to assist business and economic recovery. The program was split into two stages:</p> <p>Stage 1 focused on the preparation of business recovery plans for business operators and business organisations. Organisations such as local government authorities, regional development organisations, local/regional tourism boards/associations could also update existing industry development strategies. Funding of up to \$10,000 (GST exclusive) was available for this stage.</p> <p>Stage 2 addressed eligible projects arising from recovery plans, prepared post Cyclone Larry. However, for organisations such as local government authorities, regional development organisations, local/regional tourism boards/associations, strategic economic recovery projects could be funded under stage 2. Under this stage, 100% of funds up to \$50,000 was available. Additionally, up to 50% of any amount over and above \$50,000 could be considered for support.</p>	Department of State Development
Women in Business Coaching  Maximum: up to 50% of project funding up to \$15,000	The Women in Business Coaching Scheme aims to help Queensland female business owners and operators identify and implement strategic, practical, and cost-effective solutions to issues and challenges confronting their business. Programs funded under the scheme will match participating female business owners with qualified business coaches.	Department of State Development
Indigenous Business Development Grants Scheme	To build within Indigenous communities individual and collective community knowledge, skills and capacity in economic development, business start-ups, management and operational planning leading to the establishment of Indigenous owned businesses and to increase Indigenous employment.	Department of State Development

## Strategic Documents

# OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE

### Background

Tropical Cyclone Larry, a Category 5 system with estimated wind speeds of up to 290 kilometres per hour, struck Far North Queensland on Monday 20 March 2006, causing widespread damage to an area estimated at over 12,500 square kilometres. Federal, State and Local Government departments and agencies, plus community organisations responded quickly and admirably to the disaster. However, due to the extent of devastation it quickly became apparent that a special team would be required to coordinate and manage a recovery operation of such size and complexity.

**Scope.** This document aims to outline the guiding principles for that team, the Operation Recovery Task Force. It also identifies the Task Force structure and lead agencies in the recovery effort.

### Task Force Membership

On Friday 24 March, Premier Peter Beattie announced the formation of an Operation Recovery Task Force, to be headed by recently retired General Peter Cosgrove. Other Task Force members appointed were Sandy Hollway, who oversaw the ACT Bushfire Recovery; the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Ross Rolfe; and the recently retired Queensland Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Terry Mackenroth. In recognition of the significant role that insurance providers will play in the reconstruction effort, Deputy President of the Insurance Council of Australia, John Mulcahy joined the Task Force on Thursday 20 April.

### Guiding Principles

The Task Force was initially established for an open-ended tenure, and is being supported by a project team comprising officers from relevant State Government Departments. The core principle behind the establishment of the Task Force was to provide effective on-site leadership, to focus all necessary resources, and to achieve the most efficient and speedy recovery of affected communities. To achieve this, the Task Force has a mandate to conduct the widest possible consultation with: State, Federal and relevant Local Governments; Industry including primary, secondary and tertiary sectors; community groups and organisations; Insurers; and all other groups associated with the Recovery effort. The Task Force will attempt to inspire confidence within the community, by processing and instigating recovery initiatives and focusing on achievement and progress, through a coordinated and comprehensive communications strategy aimed at maintaining community spirit and morale. The Task Force will also coordinate offers of assistance to maximise the benefit to the community. Terry Mackenroth, as the chair of the Appeal Fund Distribution Committee, will ensure coordination of appeal fund activities with other Task Force initiatives.

In broad terms the Recovery Task Force principles are:

- Provide the leadership to focus, coordinate and drive the development of whole of Government policy to set recovery on the most effective pathway, but not to duplicate or complicate the existing Government machinery and activity in response to the Cyclone;

- Focus on the short to medium term to address the immediate effects of TC Larry and return regions to the Status quo, while positioning the Queensland Government to develop and implement longer term measures as appropriate;
- Provide the conduit between the community and the State Government by having an attentive and available ear to gain an appreciation community concerns and local government issues, while providing a voice on the ground to explain State Government policy and emphasise progress;
- Facilitate individual decisions about rebuilding without imposing a 'one size fits all' solution.
- Monitor the implementation of the Government's special machinery developed to manage the recovery process, provide independent critical review to identify weaknesses and identify possible improvements, and report back to the Premier on progress;
- Ensure a smooth and expedient transition from special Task Force measures and machinery to mainstream departmental policy; and
- Identify areas where there may be a need for ongoing special machinery after the Task Force has dissolved to ensure continuous and comprehensive recovery action.

### **Operation Recovery Task Force Structure**

The Task Force has a small coordinating element supporting the Task Force Head and three subordinate agencies: the Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG), the Building Coordination Centre (BCC) and the Industry Action Group (IAG). The ORMG and BCC are located in Innisfail, while the IAG is a special standing committee that meets with peak industry bodies across the region. The Task Force is also supported by the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) which also has a number of special groups. The interaction of these groups is outlined in a separate Governance Framework document.

### **State and Federal Departments and Agencies directly involved in Operation Recovery**

While the Task Force will assist Government by identifying the strategic level policy challenges, Departments and agencies will be required to analyse, develop and test policy solutions to be recommended to Government. Once policy solutions have been adopted these Departments and agencies will then play a significant and critical role in implementing these policies. Departments and agencies playing a significant role in the Recovery process are:

- Department of the Premier and Cabinet;
- Department of Communities;
- Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services
- Commonwealth Department of Human Services (Centrelink)
- Queensland Police Service;
- Department of Emergency Services;
- Department of Employment and Training;
- Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation;
- Queensland Health;
- Department of Housing;
- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries;
- Department of Public Works;
- Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation;
- Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development; and
- Queensland Treasury.

## **Summary**

This strategic foundation document sets out the guiding principles for the conduct of the Recovery Task Force. It has three subordinate, strategic level documents: a strategic road map that defines the methodology to achieve the Task Force goals; a governance framework that outlines the interaction between the organisations involved; and a list of significant events which contribute to the achievement of strategic milestones on the way to recovery.

# Operation Recovery Task Force Strategic Road Map



Phase	Immediate Response		Task Force Leadership and Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) on the ground		Operation Recovery Management Group on the ground with Task Force Leadership visits		Task Force ends with residual special arrangements continuing ORMG remains on the ground and reports to SDMG		Mainstream follow through
Target Time Frames	TC Larry Hits 20 March 2006	Initial Emergency Response transitions to Recovery 1 April 2006	Budget for Recovery FY 06/07 6 June 2006	End of the Financial Year 30 June 2006	Transition Plans Approved by Task Force 30 September 2006	Commence transition to SDMG oversight 31 October 2006	Start of next Wet Season 1 December 2006	Recovery programs delivered by lead agencies and Local Government October 2007	
Community Support, Health and Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 1 Emergency payments</li> <li>Provision of food and water</li> <li>Community support through NGOs (Red Cross, Salvation Army etc)</li> <li>Initial Outreach response teams consisting of Communities, Housing and Local Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish One Stop Shops</li> <li>Case Management of individuals</li> <li>Outreach Teams</li> <li>Develop a Community Support, Health and Well-Being Strategy</li> <li>Establish community support programs including: small grants for local initiatives, mentoring Community Recovery Groups, and counselling services</li> <li>Phase 2 (Home Contents) payments</li> <li>Premier to issue a Community Support, Health and Well-Being statement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Force retains oversight of Community Support, Health and Well-being initiatives including counseling services</li> <li>One Stop Shops continue</li> <li>Case Management of individuals continues</li> <li>Outreach Teams continue</li> <li>Community Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing State Communities Recovery Committee, reporting to State Disaster Management Group (SDMG), takes carriage of oversight and monitoring</li> <li>One Stop Shops continue</li> <li>Case Management of individuals continues</li> <li>Outreach Teams continue</li> <li>Community Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing human services provided by Government agencies as part of normal business</li> <li>Revert to normal government coordination arrangements</li> </ul>				
Housing and Reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial safety assessments</li> <li>Tarping of buildings with damaged roofs to limit further damage</li> <li>Emergency short-term housing</li> <li>Initial clean-up</li> <li>Trades volunteers</li> <li>ADF support</li> <li>Provision of emergency power and commence restoration of mains power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Migration of households from emergency short-term accommodation to medium/long term accommodation</li> <li>Establishment of Building Coordination Centre (BCC)</li> <li>Appointment of independent insurance advisors</li> <li>Collection and analysis of data</li> <li>Assessment of Phase 3 (claims for the structural assistance grants) for the uninsured</li> <li>Quantify need for reconstruction workers</li> <li>Prioritisation of repair work for accommodation providers</li> <li>Establish additional temporary housing to meet accommodation needs of families awaiting home repairs and reconstruction workers</li> <li>Premier to issue a comprehensive statement on housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconstruction continues under the oversight of the Taskforce</li> <li>BCC continues</li> <li>Independent Insurance advice continue</li> <li>Continue to monitor requirements for public housing</li> <li>Continue phase 3 (structural repairs) payments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The existing Housing Taskforce established by the State Disaster Management Group takes carriage for ongoing reconstruction</li> <li>BCC continues with additional focus on defect liability</li> <li>Independent Insurance advice continues</li> <li>Wherever possible, all habitable homes under the purview of the Task Force weather proof before next wet season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long term building processes back under normal departmental and Local Government control as part of mainstream activity</li> </ul>				
Economic Recovery and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial visits and consultation with effected individuals across all industry sectors to gain an appreciation of extent of problems and possible solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Industry Action Group to address short and medium recovery issues</li> <li>Develop Impact Assessments</li> <li>Facilitate wide consultation with all sectors and representative groups to development of Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Establish Business Assistance services through single entry point hotline, appointment of business advisors for one on one consultation, and assistance in accessing relief packages</li> <li>Rural clean-up through Operation Farm Clear</li> <li>Establishment of Employment Programs</li> <li>Establish a Strategic Industry Directions Forum to consult widely with business to consider long term industry development</li> <li>Premier to issue a comprehensive statement on Industry Recovery Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task Force facilitates implementation of Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Task Force continues consultation to ensure measures are effective and achieving desired effects</li> <li>Rural clean-up through Operation Farm Clear continues</li> <li>Continue Employment Programs</li> <li>Targeted application of government programs and services</li> <li>Strategic Industry Directions Forum facilitates a 'Regional Economic Development Conference' to inform the wider business community of the proposed regional development strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue targeted application of Government programs from Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Strategic Industry Directions Forum prepares regional economic development strategies for appropriate Government consideration</li> <li>Consolidate partnerships between Government, Local Government and business leadership to implement regional economic development strategies</li> <li>Premier to issue a statement on regional development for the long term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long term back to Department as part of mainstream activity</li> </ul>				
Public Communications and Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate mass media coverage</li> <li>Disseminate information on what assistance is available and where and how to access it</li> <li>Focus on courage and resilience of community</li> <li>Emphasise need for external support and donations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newsletters</li> <li>Radio broadcasts</li> <li>Special media events that highlight progress</li> <li>Newspaper notices/adverts</li> <li>Community meetings (liaison with local leaders)</li> <li>Development of a Communications Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue newsletters</li> <li>Continue radio broadcasts</li> <li>Continue special media events that highlight progress</li> <li>Continue newspaper notices/adverts</li> <li>Continue community meetings (liaison with local leaders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ORMG continues to coordinate with oversight from Department of Premiers and Cabinet</li> <li>Continue newsletters</li> <li>Continue radio broadcasts</li> <li>Continue special media events that highlight progress</li> <li>Continue newspaper notices/adverts</li> <li>Continue community meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Back to normal public relations channels</li> </ul>				

continued over

## Operation Recovery Task Force Strategic Road Map



Appeal Funds and Offers of Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight extent of damage and suffering to maximise donations and offers of assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish distribution committees</li> <li>Develop distribution principles</li> <li>Assess and coordinate distribution of Phase One appeal funds to people whose homes were left uninhabitable</li> <li>Assess the extent of hardship and develop strategy for treatment of those in need</li> <li>Assess and coordinate distribution of Appeal funds to assist with structural damage repairs to owner occupied residences</li> <li><b>Terry Mackenroth to report on Distribution of Appeal Funds</b></li> <li>Establishment of an Offer Coordination Cell within the ORMG to align offers with need and other sources of assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committees monitor progress and identify additional funds available for distribution</li> <li>Actively communicate progress of Appeal Funds expenditure</li> <li>Continue Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committees monitor progress and distribute all remaining funds</li> <li>Continue Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appeal Fund Committees disbanded when limit of funds expended and final report submitted</li> <li>Disband Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>
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## OPERATION RECOVERY GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

In the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, the State Government decided to supplement the existing State's disaster management governance framework with an Operation Recovery Task Force.

This document summarises the existing State's disaster management governance framework and those special measures put in place for Operation Recovery and illustrates how these organisations interact.

### **Operation Recovery Task Force**

The Operation Recovery Task Force was established by the Government to help coordinate and manage the recovery process by providing effective on-site leadership to focus all necessary resources to achieve the most speedy and efficient recovery of affected communities.

The Task Force comprises General Peter Cosgrove (chair), Sandy Hollway, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, Ross Rolfe (Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet), and John Mulcahy (Deputy President of the Insurance Council of Australia, representing the insurance industry).

The chair of the Task Force is supported by a small management team comprising of a chief of staff; a community liaison officer; and a media advisor.

### **State Disaster Management Group**

The State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) is established under section 17 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003* (the Act).

SDMG is the peak disaster management body in Queensland. It establishes the strategic policy for disaster management within the State and ensures that relevant, best practice and coordinated disaster management planning, disaster mitigation (prevention and preparedness), response and recovery are conducted at all levels within the disaster management system.

In terms of the Cyclone Larry recovery process, the SDMG plays a pivotal role in leading the development of Government policy responses arising from issues identified by the Operation Recovery Task Force and assessing funding implications. It is also the conduit (through Ross Rolfe) to the Premier on policy and funding issues associated with Cyclone Larry.

All new policy and requests for extra funding will require approval of Cabinet and/or Cabinet Budget Review Committee.

Membership is as follows:

Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (chairperson);  
Director-General, Department of Emergency Services (deputy chairperson);  
Commissioner of Police;  
Director-General, Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation;

Director-General, Queensland Health;  
Director-General, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries;  
Director-General, Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation;  
Director-General, Department of Communities;  
Director-General, Department of Public Works;  
Director-General, Queensland Transport;  
Director-General, Department of Employment and Training;  
Director-General, Department of Housing;  
Executive Director, Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, Department of Emergency Services as Executive Officer (this person is also the Operational Recovery Coordinator for the Operational Recovery Management Group set up to support the Task Force on the ground).

Queensland Treasury also participates in meetings but is not a member. Others may be called upon by the SDMG to provide advice and assistance as required.

#### ***Groups to support the Task Force on the ground***

There are four groups which support the Task Force on the ground:

- Operation Recovery Management Group
- Building Coordination Centre
- Industry Action Group
- Consultative Committee (Local Government)

They deal with local operational issues on the ground but on policy matters they report back to their respective head office departments.

In addition, three one-stop shops have been established (Babinda, Innisfail, and Tableland) where people access a number of Government agencies, with 20 outreach teams working in the community daily.

The District Disaster Management and Local Disaster Management Group in the impacted region played a significant role in the initial relief operations and will continue to provide assistance in the recovery operations albeit to a lesser extent.

#### ***Operation Recovery Management Group***

The Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) provides the Taskforce with operational management in the delivery of recovery management arrangements in accordance with Government policy and community expectations. The ORMG also provides advice to the SDMG and undertakes tasks as directed.

The ORMG comprises the following State and Australian Government Departments:

Department of Housing  
Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation  
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries  
Department of Communities  
Queensland Transport

Queensland Health  
Department of Public Works  
Department of Emergency Services  
Queensland Police Service  
Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation  
Department of Employment and Training  
Centrelink  
Members of the ORMG report to an Operational Recovery Coordinator, ORC (Frank Pagano) through to the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG).

The ORC reports to the Chair of the Recovery Taskforce, General Peter Cosgrove and the SDMG through a weekly update and on a day-to-day basis as required.

#### *Building Coordination Centre*

The Building Coordination Centre (BCC) in Innisfail was established to coordinate reconstruction efforts by providing a forum for all reconstruction industry bodies and insurance companies. It also provides a one-stop shop for customers to navigate the reconstruction process including independent insurance advice.

The BCC comprises representatives from the Building Services Authority and two independent insurance advisors appointed by the Task Force, and input from Master Builders Queensland, Housing Industry Association, and Building Designers Association of Queensland.

#### *Industry Action Group*

The Industry Action Group was established to produce a comprehensive assessment of the impact of Cyclone Larry and identify and collate practical recovery strategies for devastated industries. It is co-chaired by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and the Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation.

The Group comprises the following:

General Peter Cosgrove (Chair)  
Bruce Turner, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (Deputy Chair)  
Leigh Roach, Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Chair)  
Department of Tourism, Fair Trading and Wine Industry Development  
Queensland Treasury  
James Cook University  
Geoscience Australia  
Far North Queensland Natural Resource Management Ltd

A number of industry working groups have been established under the Group to develop Industry Recovery Plans through wide consultation with industry peak bodies. These plans are to receive appropriate Government endorsement prior to implementation through special arrangements that will be monitored by the Task Force.

### *Consultative Committee (Local Government)*

This Committee is chaired by General Peter Cosgrove and its membership consists of all mayors and chief executive officers in the affected region. It is the peak forum for the Task Force to engage local government in the recovery process.

### ***Strategic Policy Sub-Groups (Head-Office Based)***

To deal with the extent of the issues arising from Cyclone Larry, a number of strategic policy groups have been established based in lead departments as follows:

- Economic Strategy Group
- Housing Taskforce
- Strategic Industry Directions Forum

#### *Economic Strategy Group*

The Economic Strategy Group is responsible for monitoring the economic impact of Cyclone Larry and developing policy options to address areas of need/gaps.

The Group comprises officers from relevant Government agencies as follows:

Department of the Premier and Cabinet (lead agency)  
Queensland Treasury  
Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation  
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries  
Department of Transport (as required)

The Group reports to the Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

#### *Housing Taskforce*

The Housing Taskforce is responsible for ensuring consideration of all housing related community recovery issues and ensuring a coordinated approach between all government agencies that have responsibility for housing related strategies in the medium to long term.

The taskforce membership comprises the following:

Department of Housing (Chair)  
Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
Queensland Treasury  
Insurance Commissioner  
Department of Public Works – QBuild  
Queensland Building Services Authority  
Residential Tenancies Authority  
Department of Communities

The Housing Taskforce reports to the Director-General, Department of Housing.

#### *Strategic Industry Directions Forum*

The Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation is facilitating the Strategic Industry Directions Forum with the objective of preparing regional economic development strategies focussing on more longer term recovery across the breadth of primary, secondary and tertiary industries impacted by the cyclone. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Tourism Queensland are key partners in the Forum. Respective agencies will ensure that strategies are reflected in core business activities, as appropriate. The work of the Forum will link with the more short and medium term focussed industry recovery plans being developed by the Industry Action Group.

The Forum will provide the opportunity for stakeholders to express their views; identify the issues that need to be addressed; and agree to the strategy.

The principles guiding the Forum are full ownership of the process by regional stakeholders; a bottom-up approach in identifying actions and strategies; using existing activities and structures rather than creating new ones; and working through partnerships with coordinated use of available resources.

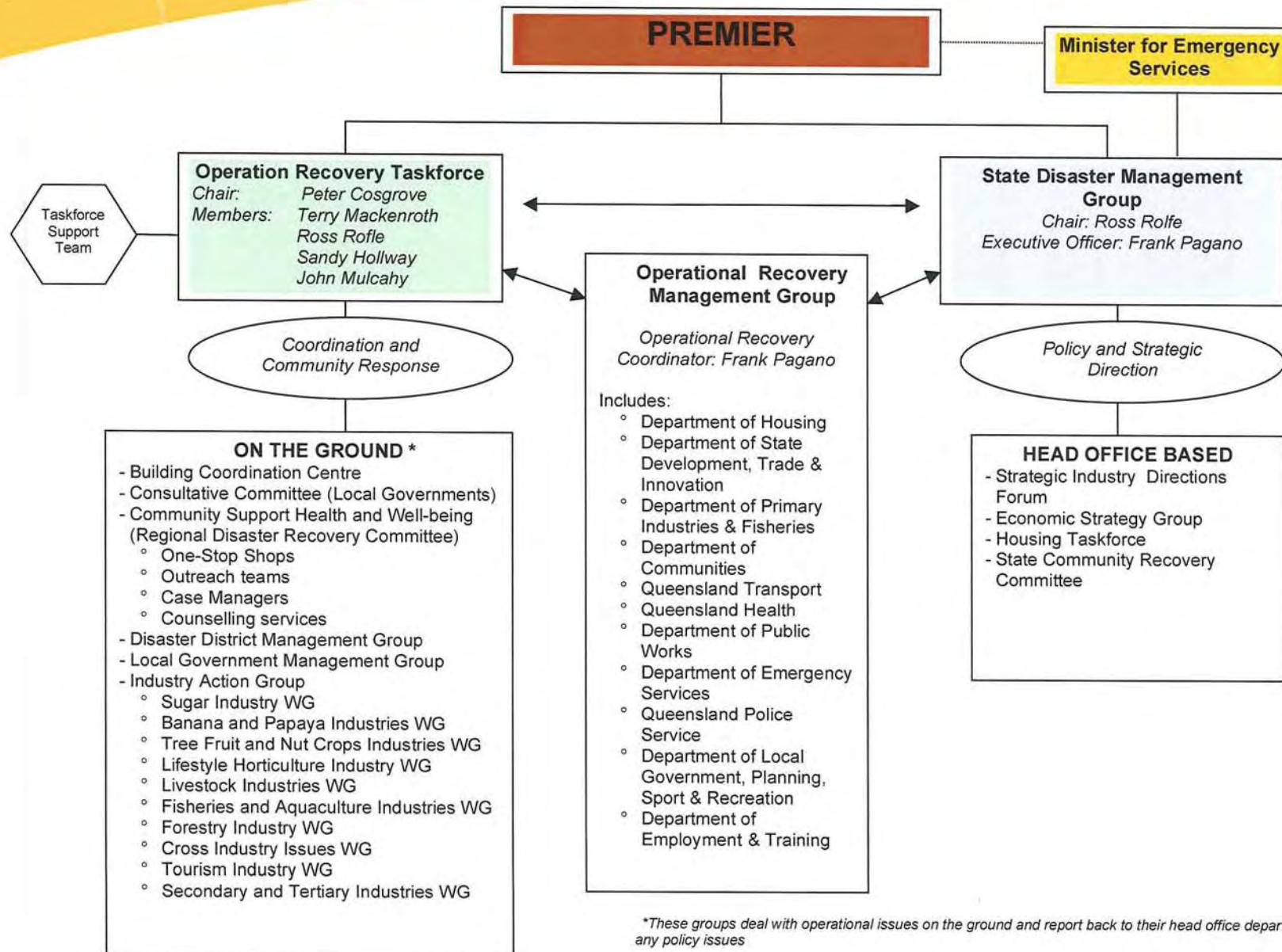
#### **Structural Chart**

A structural chart outlining the reporting relationships of the State Disaster Management Group and the Task Force as it exists to date is at Attachment 1.

#### **Transitional Arrangements**

While this document and the attached chart describe the structure as it exists now and how it has been developed in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry, these arrangements will need to be reviewed and streamlined as the recovery progresses.

A table outlining proposed transitional arrangements is at Attachment 2.



## GOVERNANCE - TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

<b>Situation Now</b> (May – October 2006)	<b>Task Force dissolves – Commence Transition</b> (31 October 2006)	<b>Mainstream follow through</b> (October 2007 onwards)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per the organisational chart</li> <li>• No further bodies/committees created if existing can be used or adapted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) becomes the single oversight peak body</li> <li>• Task Force machinery rolled under SDMG</li> <li>• Operational Recovery Management Group potentially contracts but remains on ground reporting to SDMG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ORMG wound up (if not sooner)</li> <li>• Lead departments to drive and coordinate delivery of support</li> </ul>

# OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE



## OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AND MILESTONES

The Operation Recovery Task Force Strategic Road Map outlines, in broad terms, how the Task Force intends to progress the recovery effort through the various phases of the Operation. The road map identifies a non specific target time line for the achievement of certain activities, which will trigger changes in the Task Force structure and its modus operandi. This list of significant events and milestones is designed to complement the strategic road map by providing more detail of the sequence of events in each phase of the operation. It is not designed to be an exhaustive list and there are many more events that have or will be achieved by the Task Force and other entities involved in the Recovery efforts.

### Activities completed to date

- Restoration of water supply
- Restoration of sewerage services
- Provision of food and water
- Provision of emergency power supply
- Provision of emergency housing
- Tarping of buildings to limit additional water damage
- Distribution of Phase One (Emergency Relief) payments
- Clear roads and access to properties
- Commence transition from Emergency Response to Recovery Operations
- Commence clean-up
- Establish One Stop Shops
- Commence Community Outreach programs including provision of counselling services
- Establishment of the Operation Recovery Management Group
- Establishment of an Industry Action Group
- Completion of Industry Impact Assessments
- Establishment of Building Coordination Centre
- Appointment of Independent Insurance Advisers
- Develop a Strategic Communications Plan
- Establishment of Strategic Industry Directions Forum to consider long term development
- Establishment of an Offer Coordination Cell
- Establish a single entry point for Business Assistance
- Commence hand-over of phase one appeal funds
- Announcement of further assistance from the Appeal Funds for structural damage

### Activities still to be completed while Task Force leadership on ground

- Develop a Community Support, Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Distribution of Phase Two (Home Contents) grants
- Premier to issue comprehensive Housing statement
- Premier's endorsement of Task Force Strategic Planning documents
- Establishment of temporary housing in various locations
- Commencement of Operation Farm Clear
- Commencement of community jobs program
- Commence Demolitions Program
- Commence assistance to uninsured households through the Phase Three (Structural Assistance) grants
- Commence second round Appeal Fund distributions

- Establishment of Temporary Library in Innisfail
- Assessment of all Offers of Assistance and development of a plan, endorsed by Local Government to match these offers with identified community needs, including selected community projects
- Presentation of donated goods
- Announcements of significant offers and how they will be utilised
- Tabling of Industry Recovery Plans
- Announcement of significant community based projects
- Official Opening of Tourist attractions
- Initial National Park Openings
- Completion of power restoration of all areas with mains power
- Conclusion of kerb side rubbish removal
- Task Force leadership departs disaster area, but continues to monitor progress through regular visits, with ORMG remaining on the ground to coordinate day to day activities

**Activities to be completed through Operation Recovery with Task Force leadership visitation**

- Commencement of Community based programs and projects
- Construction of first new home
- Continue remediation of National Parks and progressive openings of Parks
- Opening of facilities constructed from donated materials and labour
- Completion of repairs to Schools
- Opening of Community Recovery Projects
- Harvest of first Sugar Crop
- Develop plans to transition oversight of Task Force initiatives on the ground to the Operation Recovery Management Group under the State Disaster Management Group
- Repairs to the majority of homes complete, with the target of all habitable homes under the purview of the Task Force weather proof before the next wet season (wherever possible)
- Disbandment of Operation Recovery Task Force, with ORMG remaining on the ground, but potentially down sizing, and reporting to SDMG

**Activities to be completed with SDMG oversight after Task Force has been disbanded**

- Host a Whole of Government lessons learnt forum, where the Task Force and other lead agencies would present to a wide audience including; Federal and other State Governments, and other interested bodies and agencies
- Opening of new or rebuilt community facilities
- Opening of library
- All National Parks Opened
- Opening of new tourism ventures
- Continue distribution of remaining Appeal Funds
- Convene a 'Regional Economic Development Conference' to present long term regional economic development strategies developed by the Strategic Industry Directions Forum
- All damaged homes weather-proof before next wet season
- Cessation of employment programs
- Harvest of first Banana and other crops

**Activities to be continued with departmental oversight**

- Monitoring of concessional loans
- First harvest of long lead time crops
- Implementation and monitoring of Regional Development Plan

## Updated Strategic Road Map, including Transitional Arrangements



Phase	Immediate Response:		Task Force Leadership and Operation Recovery Management Group (ORMG) on the ground			ORMG on the ground with Task Force Leadership		Task Force disbanded with residual special arrangements continuing through ORMG and reporting to "State Disaster Management Group (SDMG)		Ongoing oversight by agencies and continued coordination by SDMG
	Target Time Frame	30 March 2006 TC Larry	1 April 2006	30 June 2006	30 September 2006	31 December 2006	31 March 2007 TC Larry Anniversary (29 March 2007)	30 June 2007	1 July 2007 onwards	
Community Support, Health and Well-Being										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Disaster Coordination Centre</li> <li>Provision of 100,000 litres of bottled water and over 6000 Quantas in-flight meals</li> <li>Phase 1 Emergency payments under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA)</li> <li>Provision of community support through NGOs (Red Cross, Salvation Army etc)</li> <li>Established initial outreach response teams consisting of Communities, Housing and Local Government</li> <li>Mental Health Disaster Recovery team established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established One Stop Shops at Innisfail, Emerald, Malanda</li> <li>Commenced Case Management of individuals</li> <li>Developed a Community Support, Health and Well-Being Strategy</li> <li>Established community recovery support programs including: small grants for local community Recovery and counselling services</li> <li>Phase 2 (Home Contents) payments under NDRA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One Stop Shops continue</li> <li>Case Management of individuals continues</li> <li>Outreach Teams continue</li> <li>Community Recovery Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One Stop Shops continue</li> <li>Case Management of individuals continues</li> <li>Outreach Teams continue</li> <li>Community Recovery Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babinda One-Stop Shop closes</li> <li>Innisfail and Malanda One-Stop Shops continue</li> <li>Case management of individuals continues</li> <li>Mental Health Disaster Recovery team continues</li> <li>Community Recovery Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innisfail and Malanda One-Stop Shop closes</li> <li>Case management of individuals continues</li> <li>Mental Health Disaster Recovery team continues</li> <li>Community Recovery Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innisfail One-Stop Shop continues</li> <li>Malanda One-Stop shop closes</li> <li>Tully outreach service location for Recovery Workers closes</li> <li>Mental Health Disaster Recovery Team ends and existing local mental health services continue with initiatives</li> <li>Case management continues (as necessary)</li> <li>Community Recovery Support Programs continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innisfail One-Stop Shops may close 30 September 2007</li> <li>Handover of community recovery responsibilities to relevant funded local and district non-government organisations who will continue to provide services including case management until March 2008.</li> </ul>		
Housing and Reconstruction										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced initial safety assessments</li> <li>Commenced tagging of buildings with damaged roofs</li> <li>Established emergency short-term housing</li> <li>Initial clean-up</li> <li>Recruited trades volunteers</li> <li>Provision of Australian Defence Force support</li> <li>Provision of emergency power and commenced restoration of mains power</li> <li>Repairs to public works commence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Migration of households from emergency damaged temporary to medium/long term accommodation</li> <li>Establishment of Building Reconstruction Centre (BCC)</li> <li>Appointment of Independent Insurance advisors</li> <li>Commenced assessment of Phase 3 (claims for the structural assistance grants) under NDRA for the uninsured</li> <li>Qualified need for reconstruction workers provided</li> <li>Prioritised repair work for accommodation providers</li> <li>Established additional temporary housing to meet accommodation needs of families affected by home repairs and reconstruction workers</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconstruction continues under the oversight of the Taskforce</li> <li>BCC continues</li> <li>Independent insurance advice continues</li> <li>Continue phase 3 (structural repairs) payments under NDRA</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCC continues</li> <li>Independent insurance advice continues</li> <li>Continue phase 3 (structural repairs) payments under NDRA</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCC continues</li> <li>Independent insurance advice continues but ongoing need reviewed</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> <li>Department of Housing continues to maintain existing housing services</li> <li>Continue phase 3 (structural repairs) payments under NDRA</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCC continues</li> <li>Independent insurance advice continues through normal Insurance Ombudsman channels</li> <li>Majority of repairs to public works complete</li> <li>Department of Housing continues to maintain existing housing services</li> <li>Continue phase 3 (structural repairs) payments under NDRA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BCC continues until 31 December 2007</li> <li>Department of Housing continues to work with local community housing organisations and support agencies to address ongoing issues and cases as identified</li> <li>Any outstanding repairs to public works completed</li> </ul>			
Economic Recovery and Employment										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial visits and consultation with affected individuals across all industry sectors to gain an appreciation of extent of problems and possible solutions</li> <li>Established cyclone lany employment package to dairy and aquaculture industries to maintain animal welfare. Portable milking machines airfreighted to North Queensland, and a vehicle and trailer provided for 6 weeks to transport the machines to farms without power.</li> <li>Repairs to public works continue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced Dialogue for Action meetings between industry organisations, local government, state agencies and Australian Government</li> <li>Established an Industry Action Group to address short and medium term recovery issues</li> <li>Facilitated consultation with all sectors and representative groups for development of Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Established Business Assistance services through inter-agency liaison and appointment of business advisors for one on one consultation, and assistance in accessing relief packages</li> <li>Farm Financial Counselling service extended</li> <li>Additional deployment of DPI&amp;F Industry Development Officers</li> <li>Established Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package</li> <li>Established a Strategic Industry Directions Forum to consult widely with business to develop a regional industry development plan</li> <li>Regional Business Development Scheme (RBDS) (Cyclone Lany Special Scheme) established</li> <li>Eight Industry Recovery Officers appointed for six months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogue for Action meetings ended</li> <li>Task Force facilitated implementation of Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Task Force continues consultation to ensure measures are effective and achieving desired effects</li> <li>Strategic Industry Directions Forum: post Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy for Government consideration</li> <li>Strategic Industry Directions Forum facilitated a 'Regional Economic Development Conference' to inform the wider business community of the proposed regional development strategies</li> <li>Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package activities continue</li> <li>Additional deployment of DPI&amp;F Industry Development Officers continued</li> <li>Commenced rural clean-up through Operation Farm Clear(OFC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogue for Action meetings ended</li> <li>Continue targeted application of Government programs from Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Industry Action Groups continue with support from DPI&amp;F</li> <li>Strategic Industry Directions Forum: post Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy for Government consideration</li> <li>Consolidated partnerships between Government, Local Governments and business leadership to implement regional economic development strategies</li> <li>Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package activities continue</li> <li>Permanent employment of additional Industry Development Officers (DPI&amp;F)</li> <li>Eight Industry Recovery Officers employment ends</li> <li>OFC continues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFC ends but some work teams remain until outstanding jobs are completed</li> <li>OFC - Farm forestry clean up continues</li> <li>Industry Development Officers continue to support primary producers and implement Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Industry Action Groups continue with support from DPI&amp;F</li> <li>Farm Financial Counselling service continues</li> <li>RBDS (Cyclone Lany Special) - Stage 1 applications close 31 October 2006/Stage 2 close 31 December 2006</li> <li>Community Jobs Plan Program ends</li> <li>Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package activities continue</li> <li>Eight Industry Recovery Officers</li> <li>Release of the 'Natural Disaster Resilience Plan' to support business and industry preparedness and risk management</li> <li>OFC continues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFC - Farm forestry clean up continues</li> <li>Industry Development Officers continue to support primary producers and implement Industry Recovery Plans</li> <li>Industry Action Groups continue with support from DPI&amp;F</li> <li>Farm Financial Counselling service continues</li> <li>Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package activities continue</li> <li>Eight Industry Recovery Officers</li> <li>Release of the 'Natural Disaster Resilience Plan' to support business and industry preparedness and risk management</li> <li>OFC continues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFC - Farm forestry clean up complete</li> <li>Industry Development Officers and Farm Financial counselling continue to be available</li> <li>Industry Action Groups continue with support from DPI&amp;F</li> <li>Majority of RBDS applications complete</li> <li>Continue to implement projects under the Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (status report due to Government)</li> <li>Cyclone Lany Employment Assistance Package activities in the region wind down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry Development Officers and Farm Financial counselling continue to be available</li> <li>Industry Action Groups continue with support from DPI&amp;F</li> <li>Continue to implement any outstanding projects under the Business and Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy</li> </ul>		
Environment										
Public Communications and Involvement										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated mass media coverage</li> <li>Disseminated information on what assistance is available and where and how to access it</li> <li>Emphasised need for external support and donations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails</li> <li>Commenced cassowary feeding program</li> <li>Commenced green and industrial waste disposal management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue ongoing repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails</li> <li>Continue cassowary feeding program</li> <li>Continue green and industrial waste disposal management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program</li> <li>Continue ongoing repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails</li> <li>Continue cassowary feeding program</li> <li>Continue ongoing repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails largely complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program continues</li> <li>Continue cassowary feeding program</li> <li>Continue ongoing repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program continues</li> <li>Continue cassowary feeding program</li> <li>Continue ongoing repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program continues</li> <li>Cassowary feeding program complete</li> <li>Repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program continues</li> <li>Cassowary feeding program complete</li> <li>Repairs to damaged national parks and walking trails complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventative Waterway Debris Removal Program expected to end 30 November 2007</li> </ul>	
Appeal Funds and Offers of Assistance										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlighted extent of damage and suffering to maximise donations and offers of assistance</li> <li>Established Distribution Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessed and coordinated distribution of Phase One Appeal funds to people whose homes were left uninhabitable</li> <li>Assessed and coordinated distribution of Appeal funds to assist with structural damage repairs to owner occupied residences</li> <li>Establishment of an Offer Coordination Cell within the ORMG to align offers with need and other sources of assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committees monitor progress and identify additional funds available for distribution</li> <li>Actively communicate progress of Appeal funds to assist with repairs to facilities of not-for-profit community organisations</li> <li>Continue Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committees continues to monitor progress and distribution of funds</li> <li>Assessed and coordinated distribution of Appeal funds to assist with repairs to facilities of not-for-profit community organisations</li> <li>Continue Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committees continues to monitor progress and distribution of funds</li> <li>Assessed and coordinated distribution of Appeal funds to assist people suffering continuing hardship with a limited capacity to recover from the effects of the cyclone</li> <li>Continue Offer Coordination Cell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committee continues to monitor progress and distribution of funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution Committee continues to monitor progress and distribution of funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise and report on disbursement of Appeal Fund</li> </ul>		

## **Examples of Useful Working Documents**

# OPERATION RECOVERY UPDATE

Issue 35

December 2006



Queensland  
Government



## MESSAGE FROM PETER COSGROVE

Best wishes for the festive season to everyone throughout the Far North.

While it has been a very trying year for many people, it is still quite remarkable to look back and see how far we have all come in the recovery process.

Large turnouts for the Christmas Carols throughout the entire cyclone affected area show that everyone must be looking forward to the Christmas-New Year break.

And while most builders and tradespeople will have a short break during the holidays, we must also thank all those who are going to keep working right through the holidays.

Another group of people who deserve our thanks are the staff members at all of the seven Shire Councils throughout the region affected by Cyclone Larry.

These people are sometimes overlooked when the thank-yous are being handed out, but they have all done an exceptional job in what have been trying times.

It has been a very busy year for everyone in the Far North, so I sincerely hope you all get the chance to put the feet up over the break and recharge the batteries for 2007.

**General Peter Cosgrove AC MC (Retd)**  
**Head of the Operation Recovery Task Force**



## Insurance Matters!

There have been 26,908 domestic insurance claims relating to damage caused by Cyclone Larry recorded to date, totalling **\$356.1 million.**

Approximately 18,000 building claims have been lodged with insurers.

## INNISFAIL ITALIAN COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS

The Innisfail Italian Community held their Annual Christmas function at Wangan Community Hall on Saturday, 2 December.

Pictured with Santa (Acting Superintendent Mike McKay) is Mrs Anetta Canu (President of the Innisfail Italian Community) together with Santa's little helper (Inspector Rob Graham). The function was attended by over 220 community members and an enjoyable time was had by all.

**Buon Natale!**



## Cyclone Appeal helping rebuild the community

The Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal is making a difference this Christmas to hundreds of Queenslanders still experiencing financial hardship as a result of the cyclone that wreaked havoc across the region on March 20 this year.

Payments are now being made under the Appeal's fourth funding round, which aims to assist people suffering continuing hardship as a result of the Cyclone.

"Total donations to the Appeal Fund have now reached \$21.7m, with \$16m allocated to date," said Distribution Committee Chairman, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth.

"The Distribution Committee is focussed on addressing the greatest need within the community," Mr Mackenroth said.

"Help is being provided to those people still doing it tough to recover from the Cyclone. This includes replacing lost household items, minor repairs to property not covered by other assistance and removal of dangerous debris," he said.

"The Committee received over 800 applications by the closing date on 1 December and has already assessed and paid hundreds of applicants.

Payments will continue in the lead up to Christmas and in the new year."

## Another chapter in the book of Recovery



Work is continuing on the temporary Johnstone Shire Council library building in Rankin Street, Innisfail.

It is anticipated the new library will be open early in 2007 to provide an enhanced service to the public who have been without a library since 20 March 2006 after Cyclone Larry damaged the previous building.



## ONE STOP SHOPS SERVICES OVER CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR

The Department of Communities would like to advise that One Stop Shops will open the following times:-

Monday, 25 December - **Closed**

Tuesday, 26 December - **Closed**

Wed, 27 to Fri, 29 December

**Open 10am—4pm**

Monday, 1 January - **Closed**

Tues, 2 Jan to Fri, 5 January

**Open 10am—4pm**



While One Stop Shops are closed, the following Lifeline Counsellors will be on call.

Christmas Day & Boxing Day:-

Bob Collyer - 0417 749 070,

Janet Collyer - 0427 658 286,

Anne Eaton - 0428 727 146,

Mark Phillips - 0417 769 597

New Years Day:-

Bob and Janet Collyer (as above) and Lois Logan 0428 995 617



## INNISFAIL SWIMMING POOL REOPENS

Ian and Julie Arthur - Lessees' of the Innisfail memorial Baths have been extremely busy since the Innisfail Swimming Pool reopened on 18 November 2006.

The whole complex has been upgraded and is open daily for public use. Come on down for dip!

**"PEOPLE DON'T REALISE WHAT THEY HAVE UNTIL THEY LOSE IT"**  
**IAN ARTHURS, LESSEE OF INNISFAIL MEMORIAL BATHS**



### "Volunteers Thank you" BBQ Breakfast

Over 50 volunteers and staff attended the QPWS Cassowary recovery Program Breakfast BBQ on the 6 December 2006 at 9am at Garners Beach.

People come from cyclone affected areas from Tully/Mission Beach, Japoonvale to Innisfail.

The main purpose of this function was for QPWS to thank volunteers delivering and preparing fruit, local businesses supplying fruit, people with feed stations on private land and staff for their involvement in the cassowary supplementary feeding program

Volunteers and staff celebrated Christmas and the combined achievements of the

program so far and it was a chance for everyone to meet and compare individual experiences with cassowaries

Each volunteer, QPWS casual staff and Wet Tropics Innisfail staff were presented with a thank you letter, certificate of appreciation and a "cassowary badge" as a token of appreciation.



### BENDIGO BANK HAS MADE SOME SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY RECOVERY-RELATED WORK OF LATE, PARTICULARLY ON THE TABLELANDS.



#### BACKYARD BLITZ

Sadly the Nine Network has decided that they do not wish to commission any more episodes of Backyard Blitz from CTC and therefore no further Blitz programs will be made.

However, Nine Network has advised the unaired program of the one we shot in October at the Innisfail State High School will be going to air during 2007. We will keep you informed of any further information should it become available.

This Recovery Update newsletter is produced by the Operation Recovery Task Force to keep residents informed about the recovery process. Please pass it on to your family and friends.

If you have anything you would like included in future editions, please contact us at: [oprectf@emergency.qld.gov.au](mailto:oprectf@emergency.qld.gov.au)

# A-Z Directory of Cyclone Recovery Assistance

## Accommodation:

Assistance with medium to long-term housing ..... 1800 623 208

## Asbestos:

Advice on safe removal of asbestos ..... 1800 177 717

## Building Coordination Centre:

1/56 Rankin Street, Innisfail ..... 1300 727 795

## Business assistance:

Department of State Development ..... 1300 36 37 11

## Carer Respite:

Carelink Centre ..... 1800 059 059

## Centrelink:

Cyclone Larry Hotline ..... 180 2002

## Clothing/Household items:

St Vincent de Paul ..... 4032 3139

Red Cross ..... 4047 6154

ADRA ..... 4061 2911

## Councils:

Johnstone ..... 4030 2222

Cardwell ..... 4043 9100

Hinchinbrook ..... 4776 4600

Eacham ..... 4096 5311

Herberton ..... 4096 2244

Atherton ..... 4091 0700

Mareeba ..... 4030 3900

Cairns ..... 4044 3044

Douglas ..... 4099 9444

Etheridge ..... 4062 1233

Croydon ..... 4745 6185

## Counselling:

Lifeline ..... 13 11 14

Department of Communities ..... 1800 440 074

Mamu Family Support Centre ..... 4061 9988

Innisfail Community Support ..... 4061 6000

Atherton Neighborhood Centre ..... 4091 3850

Atherton Family Support House ..... 4091 3850

Centacare ..... 4044 0130

Eacham Community Help Organization ..... 4096 6950

Ravenshoe Community Centre ..... 4097 6726

## Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal:

Enquiries ..... 1800 265 051

## Domestic violence:

Innisfail ..... 4061 9869

Womensline ..... 1800 811 811

Mensline ..... 1800 600 636

## Electricity:

Ergon Energy ..... 13 22 96

## Employment Assistance Hotline:

For jobs and training opportunities ..... 1800 031 921

## Fair Trading:

To report alleged profiteering or other related issues ..... 13 13 04

## Farming issues:

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries ..... 132 523

## Financial help:

For essential household items and repairs (non insured only) ..... 1800 440 074

## Fire permits:

For information and enquiries, contact the Rural Fire Service ..... 4061 0650

## Forestry Salvage:

For all forestry salvage matters please contact David Skelton ..... 4091 8705

## Health:

Flu vaccinations, Communicable Diseases, Environmental Health, Dengue Fever ..... 4050 3600

Mamu Health Service ..... 4061 4477

General ..... 13 432584

## Mental Health –

Cairns ..... 4050 3100

Innisfail ..... 4061 5327

Tablelands ..... 4091 0213

## Housing:

To offer properties for rent or seeking medium/long-term housing ..... 1800 623 208

## Insurance:

Operation Recovery Independent Insurance Advisor ..... 1300 727 795

Insurance Ombudsman for help with resolving insurance disputes ..... 1300 78 08 08

## Legal advice:

Free priority advice for people in cyclone affected areas ..... 1300 65 11 88

## One Stop Shops:

Info on financial & other assistance ..... 1800 440 074

(Open Mon-Fri 10am – 4pm)

Innisfail Central Shopping Centre (Opp IGA) ..... 4061 9908

Babinda 49 Munro Street ..... 4067 2942

Malanda 38 James Street ..... 4095 1446

## QRAA:

Qld Rural Adjustment Authority.

For interview with industry expert ..... 1800 623 946

## SES:

Atherton ..... 4091 0700

Cairns ..... 4044 3377

Cardwell ..... 4068 2600

Douglas ..... 4099 9444

Eacham ..... 4096 6638

Herberton ..... 4096 2244

Innisfail ..... 4061 2065

Mareeba ..... 4030 3900

Townsville ..... 4727 9000

## Telephones:

Telstra Cyclone Assistance Hotline ..... 1300 134 239

## Tenants:

Union ..... 1800 177 761

Tenant Advice & Advocacy Service ..... 4031 6733

[www.qld.gov.au/cyclonerelief](http://www.qld.gov.au/cyclonerelief)

# OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE

C/- Johnstone Shire Council  
PO Box 887  
INNISFAIL QLD 4860



## AGENDA - MEETING 16 – 13 DECEMBER 2006

- 1. Opening**
  - Apologies
  - Overview of progress since last meeting. (**General Cosgrove**)
- 2. Overview of third customer stakeholder survey (**Sandy Hollway**) (see **Attachment 1**)**
- 3. Reconstruction**
  - Update from BCC. (see **Attachment 2**)
  - Update on weatherproofing and demolitions. (see **Attachment 3**)
  - Update on assessment of Phase 3 structural assistance grants. (see **Attachment 4**)
  - Insurance Industry Update. (see **Attachment 5**)
  - Table Independent Insurance Advisors Report. (see **Attachment 6**)
- 4. Industry Recovery**
  - Update on grant to Dairy Farmers.
  - Update on progress of Operation Farm Clear.
  - Update on progress of Preventative Waterway Debris Removal program.
- 5. Employment**
  - Update on Community Jobs Program and employment issues
- 6. Housing**
  - Housing update
- 7. Distribution of Appeal Funds**
  - Update on distribution of Appeal Funds (**Tabled**) (see **Attachment 7**)
- 8. OP Recovery Management Group**
  - ORMG Status Report tabled. (see **Attachment 8**)
- 9. Transition Arrangements**
  - Report on proposed transitional arrangements of Government services (**For discussion**) (see **Attachment 9**)
  - Report on arrangements over Christmas/New Year (see **Attachment 10**)
- 10. Recognition Strategy**
  - Cyclone Larry Recognition Update Report (see **Attachment 11**)
- 11. Anniversary Proposal**
  - Anniversary considerations (see **Attachment 12**)
- 12. General Business**
  - Next meeting proposed for 10am – 12 noon, Monday, 29 January 2007

# OPERATION RECOVERY TASK FORCE

C/- Johnstone Shire Council  
PO Box 887  
INNISFAIL 4860



## CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

### AGENDA MEETING 16 – 24 January 2007

#### Opening (General Cosgrove)

- Apologies
- Discuss minutes and previous action items
- Overview of progress

#### Operation Recovery Management Group (Wayne Coutts)

- ORMG Update

#### Shire Summaries (Mayors/CEOs)

- Representative from each Shire provides summary of jurisdictional position.

#### Housing and Insurance (General Cosgrove)

- Summary of Insurance Council of Australia Statistics
- Feedback on housing and insurance issues (Mayors and CEOs)

#### Building Coordination Centre (Graham Ives/Ian Jennings)

- Update from the BCC
- Compliance matters
- Demolition matters
- Feedback on rebuilding matters (Mayors and CEOs)

#### Industry Recovery

- Preventative Waterway Debris Removal (Stephen Bertoochi/Errol Coleman)
- Feedback on industry recovery (Mayors and CEOs)

#### Community Health and Wellbeing

- Update on the Community Support Health and Wellbeing strategy. (Anita Egginton)
- Feedback from Community Leaders on emerging trends. (Mayors and CEOs)

#### Other Discussions

- Recognition arrangements
- 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary planning (20 March 2007)

#### Administration

- Next meeting – proposed for 10am – 12pm on Tuesday, 20 February 2007.
- Final meeting – proposed for 9am on Tuesday 20 March 2007
- Agenda Items to be emailed to [oprectf@emergency.qld.gov.au](mailto:oprectf@emergency.qld.gov.au)
- Shire issues and summaries to be received by COB Monday 19 February 2007.

# Operation Recovery Management Group

## STATUS REPORT 29

Wednesday 06<sup>th</sup> December 2006

The following agencies are involved:

- Department of Emergency Services (DES)
- Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation (DSDTI)
- Department of Employment & Industrial Relations
- Centrelink
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Department of Housing (DOH)
- Department of Communities (DOC)
- Queensland Health (QH)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F)
- Department of Natural Resources and Water
- Queensland Transport (QT)
- Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- Department of Local Government, Planning Sport & Recreation (DLGPSR)

Also included in the report are several of the agencies planned dates for Christmas closures.

### **Department of Emergency Services – Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ)**

- EMQ personnel continue to provide high-level disaster management recovery coordination and advice to Local, State and Commonwealth government agencies.

### Operation Recovery Management Group

- EMQ personnel are currently providing disaster management assistance and advice to General Cosgrove and the ORMG
- Support for the ORMG comprises EMQ Regional Executive Director Wayne Coutts and other EMQ personnel to manage/coordinate all ORMG activities. It is anticipated this support will continue for a number of months.
- The focus of the ORMG is whole-of-government long-term recovery issues.

## Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation

- **RBDS Cyclone Larry** Stage 1 closed 31 October. Stage 2 applications will be accepted until 31/12/06
- Application has been submitted for the **Southern Tableland's Economic Development Strategy** for Atherton, Eacham and Herberton Shires.
- **Risk Management workshops** - Completed
- **Tablelands Futures Corporation** has been granted approval (\$50,000) to develop an Economic Profile and Investment Attraction Study to assist in diversifying the Atherton Tableland Economy post cyclone Larry.
- **Tourism** – QTIC undertaken a Product Review for Innisfail and surrounding district in order to develop a Tourism Action recovery Plan. The Product Review and Action Plan completed.
- **Innisfail Industrial Estate** - Expressions of Interest for pre-qualified contractors has recently been advertised. Construction estimated to begin in early 2007 subject to development approval and a suitable contractor being selected.
- **Johnstone Shire Council** will be submitting an RBDS Stage 2 application to prepare an Investment Strategy for the Johnstone Shire.
- The Department of State Development and Trade has prepared a '**Natural Disaster Resilience Kit**' for business. Launched by the Premier at the 'Cyclone Summit' – 8 December 2006. Focus of the kit :
  - Generic checklist
  - Basic risk assessment process
  - Identification of potential risks to business
  - Tailored checklists for each 'type' of disaster

### DSDTI Regional Business Development Scheme – Cyclone Larry Special Stages 1 & 2

Approved (as of Friday 1 Dec 06)	202
Amount	\$1.97 Million

## Department of Employment & Industrial Relations

### Community Jobs Plan Projects Progress

To date, **707** long term unemployed people and workers displaced from their usual employment have been engaged on CJP projects via the Cyclone Larry Employment Assistance Package.

With the completion of a number of projects and winding down for the Christmas period of others, **263** were still employed as at 30 November 2006.

Completion details for November06 to January07 are:

Environment Protection Agency

21/11/06

– Group 1:

24/11/06

– Group 2:

1/12/06

QITE (Mareeba):

22/12/06

Dept of Emergency Services:

22/12/06

Johnstone Shire Council

5/1/06

Mareeba Shire Council

The following projects are continuing, have or are being extended as below:

Dept of Primary Industries to

30/6/07

(nb approx 100 participants will finish later this month)

08/6/07

QITE 2 (Mareeba)

30/6/07

Atherton Shire Council

30/6/07

Eacham Shire Council

09/2/07

Cairns City Council (Babinda)

03/2/07

Cairns Regional Group Apprentices

It is anticipated that less than 100 participants in total are/ or are yet to be engaged on these project.

The department has further funds available for Cyclone Larry related CJP-WP proposals and is currently discussing concepts with 2 possible proponents.

### Other Key Initiatives

The Department has approved two Training in Communities projects and a third is being finalised for approval. These projects provide language, literacy and numeracy and vocational training to the unemployed, existing employees requiring upskilling, under-employed or those wishing to return to the workforce. The two approved projects are:

#### Banana Industry Training Pathways Project

This project, costing \$357,925, has been jointly funded by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the Australian Agricultural College to respond to the post-Tropical Cyclone Larry recovery process for the banana industry. It provides training for a minimum of 100 people in chemical handling, pest and diseases control and crop regulation to help alleviate threats to the next crop cycle arising through the

potential outbreak of pests and diseases resulting from cyclone damage and excess plant materials and to support the banana crop staggering process implemented by DPI to avoid a glut. The initiative was developed after close consultation with peak bodies and workers. CJP-WP participants who previously worked in the industry were targeted as an incentive to help ensure their return to the industry and as a means to support industry concerns about potential labour shortages. Representatives at the recent Banana Council Labour Issues meeting voiced support for this project.

#### Hmong Community Support Project

This project provides language and literacy support to build the capacity of the Hmong Community around Innisfail and training to assist some members leaving their small banana leaseholds to find alternative employment. Tropical Cyclone Larry had a major impact on the Hmong Community, which had maintained traditional agricultural and communal lifestyle. The project provides training for alternative employment options which focus on machinery tickets, welding, construction and small engine maintenance as well as computing and business communication. The Department of Primary Industries has been funded to run the project, to support a minimum of 70 participants. In a cross agency partnership, the project operates from the Tropical North Queensland's Innisfail TAFE Campus, where a meeting room for community members and a project office has been established. Both the project co-ordinator and the part-time community liaison officer are members of the Hmong Community. DEIR, TAFE and DPI are contributing to the cost of the project - about \$250,000. DPI officer, Heather Hine, who has developed a strong relationship with the community, particularly relating to cyclone assistance issues, will also help support the project. DEIR officers are involved with delivery and mentoring support for the coordinator.

The management of DEIR Cyclone Larry Recovery Projects has reverted to Far North Queensland Regional Office and will continue to be supported by 1.5 full time equivalent staff in FNQ with additional administrative and policy support from Brisbane.

## Australian Government - Centrelink

Australian Government Assistance - 20 March 2006 to 30 November 2006:

Serial	Assistance Measure	Claims Granted	Amount Paid \$
1	Ex-gratia direct credit (bank account) payments	38,697	37,608,200
3	Business Assistance Fund	11,952	140,100,000
4	Income Support for Farmers and Small Business	2,311	8,822,005
5	Fuel Excise Relief	7,000	2,291,809
6	<b>Totals</b>	<b>59,960</b>	<b>188,822,014</b>

Centrelink Call Centres answered 47,900 calls to the Hotline in the period 20 March 2006 to 23 November 2006.

### SUMMARY

#### 1/ TC Monica:

**Data (as at 30 November 2006)**

Business Assistance  
Income Support

474  
44  
518  
\$5,805,000  
174,415  
\$5,979,415

Total

#### 2/ Special Cyclone Assistance

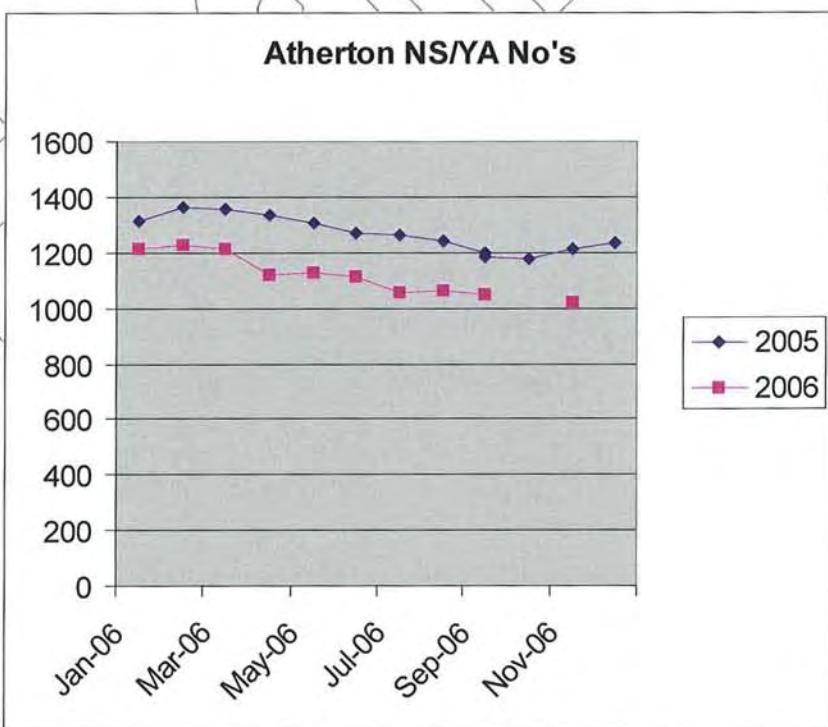
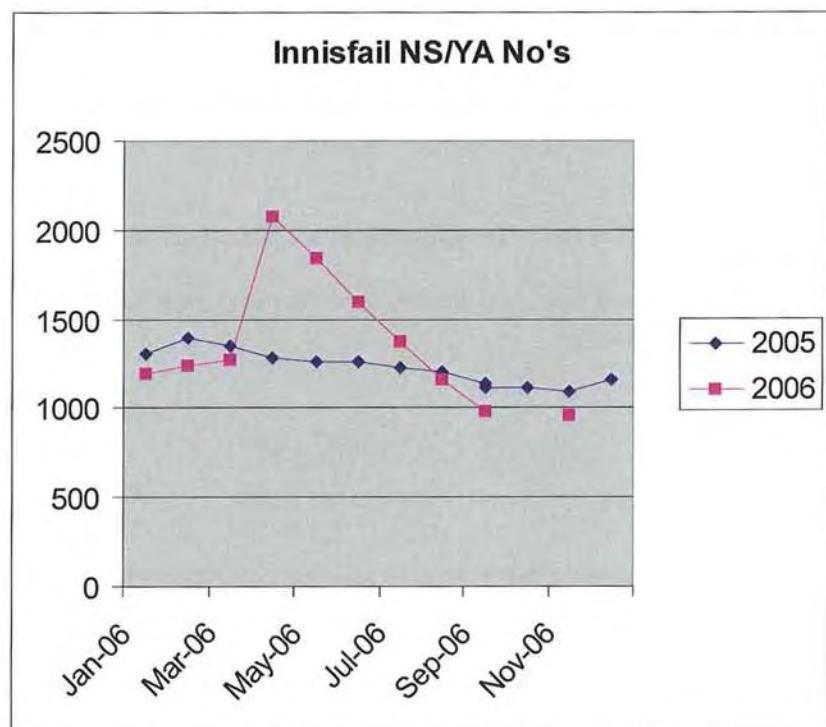
All Australian Government special assistance for individuals, businesses and farmers has now finished. Centrelink has a small number of claims on hand which are being reviewed or are waiting for information from the applicant. Centrelink is continuing to look at other options for farmers who may still be struggling financially.

#### 3/ Banana Growers and labour issues

There are on-going meetings being held with the Banana Growers. Good stakeholder engagement, with all appropriate Agencies being involved (State, Commonwealth, JNMs and training providers). Banana Growers advise they'll need an additional 1000 workers towards the end of January. There are still only a small proportion of them registering their vacancies with the Job Network – this is a critical problem if they're expecting assistance with the labour shortage.

The Banana Growers held their Council meeting last Friday to decide on which measures to endorse.

4/ Unemployed numbers



## **Queensland Police Service**

S/Sgt Rhys NEWTON has advised that the Coroner's office at Innisfail and Mareeba were not made contact with as mentioned in the minutes of the November ORMG meeting. Upon further investigation it has been determined that there has been no increase in suicides in the reported areas affected by cyclone Larry.

- From Police records, suicides since the cyclone are within previous trends.
- There have been no known reported suicides that can be directly related to cyclone Larry

Exhibit 39

## Department of Public Works

### OVERVIEW of CURRENT ACTIVITIES

#### RESOURCING (QBuild field staff, contractors and suppliers)

QBuild is continuing to rotate staff throughout the regions of Cairns, Innisfail and the tablelands. There are still 17 tradespersons assisting cyclone repair work in the Innisfail region and 5 tradespersons assisting in the Atherton Tablelands Districts. This is still being monitored on a weekly basis and the resources reassigned as priorities change.

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

- 7 Harwood St – Babinda – Documents have since been received and QBuild is reviewing the details.

#### HUDSON URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT

- Completed.

#### TRANSPORTABLE ACCOMMODATION PROJECT

- Completed

#### DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS RELOCATABLE PROJECT (TOWNSVILLE PROJECT)

Critical projects to be completed (location, type of work, timeframes)

- 5 x Logan type houses and 2 x "E" type have been refurbished. These houses are to be transported to the following locations
  - **26 Bachelor Street, Goondi Bend –Innisfail**
    - Practical completion 19-9-06
  - **8 Mahongany Street, Innisfail,**
    - Minor fencing works to still be completed.
    - Tenanted
  - **13 Water Levek Road, Silkwood**
    - Exterior decking, veranda and external fixtures are under construction and at 80% complete
  - **6 Boombala Street, Mourilyan**
    - Painting at 95%.

- **69 Lyons Road, Innisfail has been relocated to 2 Water St (New site)**
  - House has arrived on site at 69 Lyons St and QBuild has been directed to move the property to 2 Water St. Dispute has been resolved by Department of Housing and QBuild is actioning the relocation as per directions from our client.
  - Draftsperson has been engaged to provide new documentation.
  - Footing inspections are being conducted 10/11/06
- **33 Scheu Street**
  - House has arrived on site and is to be installed by Housing contractor.
  - Qld Housing require town planning approval for 33 Scheu Street as they plan to relocate 2 houses on the same block. BAC can not be forwarded until approval is received
- **12 Church Street, Babinda**
  - delivery to be advised
- **153 – 155 Munro Street, Babinda**
  - delivery to be advised

#### Issues

- The 2 Babinda houses have been approved 31/10/06. Quotes being reviewed and sourced by Qbuild to the marketplace..
- QBuild awaiting advice for 33 Scheu Street Qld Housing have changed the location of the houses on the site and are considering commencing these works before Babinda to manage the demand of Housing availability.
- Qld Housing require town planning approval for 33 Scheu Street as they plan to relocate 2 houses on the same block. BAC can not be forwarded until approval is received. (Application is with the Johnston Shire Council) and submitted by Department of Housing.

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

All site inspections are now completed.

Assessments received from DOC	Number Sent to DOC	Assessments received from Premiers	Number Sent to Premiers	Total No of inspections outstanding	Anticipated No of Inspections
618	618	71	71	0	689

#### DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

- Innisfail Block C – completed and the site has now been turfed and ready for the repositioning of the T2000 Bendigo buildings. On the area of the former block C, there will be four (4) double Bendigo relocatable classrooms positioned that will require new concrete paths and covered walkways to the buildings.

- Innisfail State High School Block B – the reconstruction of the end walls have been completed and waiting on the walls to be rendered and painted. The renderer arrived onsite 7/11/06 followed by the painter and work is still underway.
- Innisfail State School Block B cont. – demolition of end walls commenced on 27 September 2006 and reconstruction of the end walls has commenced. One end wall is rebuilt, but not painted and the second end wall will start to have scaffolding erected on the 02/11/06 to begin the reconstruction. Both walls are under construction and will be rendered and painted
- Rebuild of the covered walkway and common area Innisfail SHS.- currently being scoped and BAC documentation is being retrieved from the school for the reconstruction
- Structural repairs are continuing on various sites. Some of these sites include:
  - Innisfail SHS Block C – Demolition – 100% complete
  - Innisfail SHS Block B – repairs to end wall – 95% complete
  - Innisfail SHS Covered Area – Refer below
  - Innisfail SS – Block B – Repairs to End-walls – 75% complete
  - Mourilyan SS – Repairs to damaged roof – 100% complete.
  - South Johnstone SS – Repairs to teaching block – Planned to be conducted over school holidays
  - Babinda SS – Repairs to Stair well – Planned to be conducted over school holidays
  - Tully SHS – Repairs to walls block E – Out to tender – Planned to be conducted over school holidays
  - Millaa Millaa SS – Damage to Block C – 100% Complete
  - Redlynch SS – Demolition of damaged Covered Play area – 100% complete.
- All major roof repairs to buildings complete. Outstanding items include repairs to covered links being programmed for upcoming school holiday period.
- Majority of floor covering replacement complete.
- Majority of debris and tree works complete. Follow up works still being actioned on some sites as contractors become available to return. Type of works that are still outstanding include stump grinding, dressing of damaged grounds ect.
- Majority of major fence repairs being actioned, follow up works and minor repairs being conducted at various sites on a continual basis.

#### **Shade Sail Program:**

- Tenders have closed, orders placed and works have commenced on the works for 22 school sites. This work planned to be completed by 23/12/06
- Tenders have been called for an additional 20 site, closing 20/11/06 currently in assessment. Orders expected to be placed by 25/11/06.
- All shade replacement planned to be completed by 19/01/07.

#### **EQ Residences Generally:**

Approx 180 cyclone related tasks have been identified on EQ residences. Types of damage or repair work ranges from broken windows, roller doors through to roof repairs, and major structural damage.

Approx 90 task completed to date. Follow up works and minor repairs being address on continual basis.

From TC Larry it is suspected that some older style residences in the affected areas may have suffered some form of structural damage. One property required demolition (Moresby Res 001). To confirm extent of damage on residences EQ have engaged engineers reinspect and assess all older residences for structural adequacy.

## OTHER CLIENTS

- Silkwood Queensland Ambulance Service – Building has been fully refurnished, outstanding works include floor covering, internal painting, minor repairs to bathroom and replacement of two stoves – 90% complete overall. Internal painting 100% complete, furniture has been delivered to Cairns and all structural repairs completed.
- Mourilyan Queensland Police Service residence – client reviewing QBuild's quote. Approval to proceed was issued to QBuild 30/10/06. Quote with the client and waiting regional
- Department of Primary Industries, South Johnston – rebuild the greenhouse – Orders have been placed on contractor. QBuild has been advised that there will be a 6 week delay on the manufacturing of the glass house. All frames are being rebuilt of site and currently on the fabricators floor checking the configuration is right before it is erected. Anticipated onsite start in the 25/11/06.
- Queensland Police Services – Yungaburra Police Station and the Mourilyan Res 002 property. Tenders closed on 13 October 2006. 3 tenders were received for the Yungaburra Police Station with a quote being forwarded to the regional client contact. Revised end date is January 30<sup>th</sup>. Orders have been placed and contractors have started to order materials prior to setting up the construction site.
- Request from GEHB to provide an engineers report on the PPM property at 04 Badilla St in Innisfail. This request has come as a result of the tenant being concerned about the roof stability as most properties surrounding this house has received major damage.

## INDUSTRY

QBuild are utilising regional resources with a staff rotation process throughout the affected area. There is however, in general a trade shortage in plumbing, roofing, carpentry, electrical and painting.

### Tenders

- Shade sail replacement program – orders have been placed for stage 1. 4 tenders in all and 3 other tenders in the market place. Suppliers are having difficulties in tendering due to supply and demand in the area. The successful tender for the Zone A (Cairns Region) is currently in progress and the contractor has started on his cutting lists for some sites and the ordering of the steel posts and frame has begun.

## Department of Housing

### OVERVIEW OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES

#### Public Housing

- Innisfail: 7 houses have been relocated from Townsville and are now located on various sites in Innisfail. 2 dwellings are tenanted and 2 dwellings are due for handover by Q Build. 1 additional dwelling has also been purchased in Innisfail
- Babinda: 2 houses will be relocated to Babinda including 1 x 3bed sourced from Townsville and 1 x 3bed from Cairns; however these properties will not be available until early 2007.
- In addition, 4 factory built houses are to be sourced and purchased for re-location to Innisfail, including 2 x 4 bedroom houses and 2 x 3 bedroom houses.
- Bond Loans and Rental Grants are available to people in housing need to assist them into housing in the private rental market.
- Hours of business: Department of Housing area office (Cairns) and phone lines will be open for normal business over the Christmas period. The office will be closed on for all public holidays including Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day.

#### Community Organisations / Community Transitional Accommodation

- Department of Housing funding provided to community organisations in Cairns, Townsville and on the Tablelands to assist them to rent properties from the private rental market to house people in housing need.
- Additional accommodation has been provided in several locations in Johnston Shire and Babinda including:
  - Innisfail & district – relocatable accommodation providing an additional 114 beds plus relocatable building and ablution for library
  - Babinda – ex-nurses quarters and relocatable accommodation providing an additional 35 beds plus relocatable building for community hall

#### Private Rental Market

- Demand for rental properties is high and sourcing of rental properties from the private market remains difficult. Average rents have increased right across the rental property market in all areas (state wide).

### SUMMARY OF MAJOR ISSUES

#### Public Housing Stock

- High demand for public housing in all areas

#### Status of local rental market

- Sourcing of private rental properties remains difficult and average rents have increased in all areas; with very low vacancy rates and growing demand for low cost housing.

**Bonds held for the Johnstone and Cardwell Local Government Areas January 2006 - Oct 2006**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2006 % change from previous month</b>
Jan	1272	1337	
Feb	1276	1350	0.97%
Mar	1280	1333	-1.26%
Apr	1285	1258	-5.63%
May	1301	1243	-1.19%
Jun	1307	1224	-1.53%
Jul	1316	1222	-0.16%
Aug	1314	1216	-0.49%
Sep	1316	1224	0.66%
Oct	1343	1214	
Nov			

RECEIVED  
EXHIBIT

## Department of Communities

All One Stop Shops are operational (10am to 4pm Monday to Friday), as follows:

- Tablelands Service – 38 James Street, Malanda
- Babinda District Service – 49 Munroe Street, Babinda
- Johnstone/Tully Service – Central Shopping Centre, 20 Edith Street, Innisfail, and Shop 4a Midtown Arcade, 18-20 Butler Street, Tully

**TABLELANDS** outreach activities have focused on the following locations: Ravenshoe, Malanda, Tolga, Atherton, Millaa Millaa, Silver Valley, Topaz, Yungaburra, Lake Eacham, and Herberton.

**BABINDA DISTRICT** outreach activities took place in: no activities took place this month

**JOHNSTONE/TULLY** outreach occurred at: Moresby, Palmerston, Innisfail, Belvedere, South Johnstone, Mena Creek, Mourilyan, Daradgee, and Flying Fish Point.

### One Stop Shop Service Delivery (as at 6 December 2006)

	Number of Contacts	Outreach Visits	Counselling Referrals
<b>Total</b>	37,025	9,013	2,286

### 1800 Emergency Assistance Hotline

- As at 6 December 2006, the 1800 Emergency Assistance Hotline had taken 13,943 calls for assistance.

### Relief Assistance – Status (as at 6 December 2006)

	Applications Received	Eligible Applications	Payments Made
<b>Phase 1 Emergent Relief (closed 9 April)</b>		14,000	\$5.5 Million
<b>Phase 2 Home Contents (closed 3 May)</b>	3,880	2,773	\$3.5 Million
<b>Phase 3 Repairs to Dwellings (closed)</b>	737 to date	310 to date*	\$2.6 Million to date

**\*Note:** The number of eligible P3 applications will continue to fluctuate, as applications yet to be assessed are included.

**\*\*Note:** Total includes funds transferred into Building Services Authority holding account.

- 211 Phase 3 payments have been made, 18 of which are for replacement caravans or repairs.
- 259 Eligible Phase 3 (repairs to dwellings) applications have been approved for Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) funding. To date, 77 applications have been approved by the Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal Trustees for supplemental funding above the NDRA limits.
- 98 client cases have been paid and finalised, however case management may still be occurring regarding other personal or psychological assistance needs.

## ISSUES

### Community Recovery Calendar

- The proposed Community Recovery calendar will not be produced this year. The communications team is in discussions with EMQ and with the Department's own Marketing and Communications branch to discuss future options.

### Demolition/ Rebuilding of uninsured houses

- Nine people have applied, and are eligible for phase 3 financial assistance who require a demolition and rebuild of a complete dwelling to achieve a safe, legal, habitable standard at a reasonable cost.
- Two of the nine people have done their own demolition, with BCC and Bovis Lend Lease managing the remaining demolitions.
- Three people still require re-housing options for the duration of the demolition and rebuild process – the department is currently trying to get funding to rent dongas, which are deemed to be the most suitable re-housing option for the specific needs of the three individuals. The other seven people have achieved suitable re-housing.
- These clients are starting to undertake the rebuild process. They are working with case workers to make decisions about their preferred options. BCC is providing support regarding building related processes and requirements (including planning/building approvals, contract management etc).

### Christmas operations (22 December 2006 – 2 January 2007)

- Community Recovery Services currently delivers direct services to affected communities through 36 dedicated Recovery Workers in five teams (three One Stop Shops in Babinda, Malanda and Innisfail, a Cairns 1800 Recovery Line, and a specialist case management service which assists clients with repairs to dwellings). There are a further 21 support staff, including Team Leaders and Services Managers engaged in direct service delivery.
- Plans for operations over the Christmas / New Year period are in place and are as follows:
  - all three One Stop Shops will be operational, running business as usual, on 27, 28, and 29 December 2006 (signs advising these dates and hours of operation are being displayed prominently at all three One Stop Shops);
  - the Cairns1800 Recovery Line will be operational on 27, 28, and 29 December 2006 and after-hours arrangements will be put in place through a message service; and
  - all key Community Recovery Services support staff will be working on 27, 28, and 29 December 2006.
- While One Stop Shops will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, a strategy for people in psychological or emotional crisis has been negotiated with Lifeline to ensure continuity of service provision during this period (Lifeline will provide four counsellors over Christmas and four counsellors over New Year's).
- Additionally, the Regional Coordinator, Community Recovery Services, will be 'on-call' on each of the public holidays to support the strategy outlined above.
- Community Recovery Services in FNQ has plans in place to formally advise each client in writing of these arrangements.

### Community Recovery Services 2007

- In October 2006, Community Recovery Services (FNQ) conducted a planning workshop with partner government and non-government agencies to develop a service model for 2007 including transition out of direct service delivery and a move to community-based service delivery.
- In keeping with other experiences of recovery, it is timely and appropriate to build the capacity of the existing local and district non-government organisations (NGOs) to increase the recovery related support services they are able to offer to people and groups in their communities.
- To this end, it is anticipated that direct (departmental) service delivery in FNQ will extend to 30 September 2007, and that indirect (non-government) service delivery will continue until March 2008. This transition plan and service model was approved by the Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth on 28 November 2006.
- Staff numbers will decrease from 100 currently to 63 (including specific transition roles) between January and June 2007, to 25 between July and September 2007, and then to one (plus four external positions) between October 2007 and March 2008.
- **From January to June 2007, Recovery Worker service delivery functions will be provided by two direct services – one on the coast (based in Innisfail), and one on the Tablelands.**
- The One Stop Shop at Innisfail will continue to function in its current form, with an increased focus on providing outreach services to the Babinda and Tully districts (the office in Tully will remain open until 30 June 2006 as an outreach service location for Recovery Workers).
- The One Stop Shop in Babinda will close from 31 December 2006, but two Recovery Services Workers will be located in the area providing services to local people in collaboration with funded local and district NGO recovery partners.
- The Tablelands One Stop Shop (at Malanda) will continue to be focussed on providing outreach services to the Tablelands area, with shop front opening hours gradually decreasing over time.
- It is proposed to close the remaining One Stop Shops and 'hand-over' community recovery responsibilities to relevant funded local and district NGOs in FNQ by 30 September 2006.

#### **Strategic communication services**

- Discussions between Department of Communities and Department of Premier and Cabinet are underway to make arrangements for whole of recovery and whole of agency communications activities to be provided by the Strategic Communications work unit within Department of Communities from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.
- The work unit will be headed by Lyndal Scobell, and arrangements will be put in place for the Taskforce and for DPC to 'purchase' strategic communications services from the work unit. More information will be forthcoming as final arrangements are put in place.

## Queensland Health

- Queensland Health continues, and will continue to, maintain a collaborative approach to all matters related to the on-going physical and psychological wellbeing of residents in the cyclone affected areas.
- There are currently no major issues of primary concern to the agency.

Future reports will be based on exceptions only basis, as matters arise.

Exempt

## Environmental Protection Agency

### Overview of Current Activities

**EPA contacts and recovery activities over Christmas closure (22 December 2006 to 2 January 2007)**

As with all urgent pollution or wildlife enquiries, any cyclone recovery related matters that require immediate attention will be addressed through our Agency wide after hours call centre number **1300130372** (EPA Hotline – highlighted in phone book).

Cassowary supplementary feeding program (maintaining 58 feeding stations) will continue through the Christmas period – managed by QPWS staff and community volunteers. Cassowary incident management will also continue, via the hotline number.

Up to date camping and walking track repair information will be circulated to key tourism stakeholders by email prior to Christmas with regular up dates and advice on EPA website (see latest update below).

### **CJP Work Program**

The QPWS CJP program was completed 21 November. An informal 'thankyou'/graduation ceremony was held for the program participants at Warrina Lakes on 17 November.

The work program focused on cleaning up a range of national parks, state forests, forest reserves and nature refuges throughout the Wet Tropics area impacted by Tropical Cyclone Larry. Specific activities included chain sawing fallen trees, clearing and rebuilding walking tracks and clearing day use areas, visitor infrastructure and camping grounds.

Other work included repair and painting toilet blocks, construction of fences and the erection of signage. Some of the groups have also been involved in repairing and re building bridges and road culverts, pre fabricating formwork, road drainage work, weed control, habitat and aesthetic revegetation works, mowing and whipper snipping, repairing wildlife rehabilitation facilities, boxing and concrete construction work.

A total of **110 CJP workers** were employed over the 6 months period (3 administration workers and 107 field workers)

- 85 participants in the initial round commencing 22/5/06
- 3 in between first and second round
- 22 in the second round commencing 25/9/06

Please note the following statistics pertaining to the 51 Field Workers who had exited the program by early November 2006:

Gained other external employment	25
Gained casual employment with QPWS	5
No reason provided for leaving	8
Other reasons for leaving	14
(e.g. childcare issues, ill-health, relocation, travelling etc.)	

The following training was received by participants:

Accredited training (all):

- Construction Industry Blue Card
- Senior First Aid
- Chainsaw level 1 accreditation

Non-accredited training:

- Induction to EPA / QPWS (all)
- Manual Handling in the workforce (all)
- Recruitment to Government jobs (all remaining CJP workers in November 2006)

The additional training and skills gained by the participants (including the very strong QPWS workplace health and safety culture) will generally benefit the wider North Queensland workforce by enhancing the skills base of the available pool of potential employees.

Five people are currently employed in casual positions with QPWS in a range of positions (wildlife or park management) at Josephine Falls, Lake Eacham, the Palmerston area and Mission Beach. Other CJP participants have obtained work in areas where they previously lacked relevant experience and qualifications e.g. the landscaping and tree-lapping industry. In all 25 CJP participants had returned to work in local industries by the end of October 2006.

QPWS is also investigating a range of employment options for continuing the post-cyclone recovery work. These include contract and casual/temporary employment options. Although recruitment to any new positions would need to be merit based and open to all parties, experienced CJP workers would be well-placed in term of their knowledge, experience and training.

Many CJP workers stated that they enjoyed the sense of community and job satisfaction provided by the program – particularly noting that they valued being part of a team that was contributing to ongoing post-cyclone environmental and economic recovery.

The re-opening of recreational and tourism infrastructure in a timely manner across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area has been of major benefit to the community as well as to QPWS as host organisation. Program participants have dedicated their time and labour to the reinstatement of iconic destinations supporting both the North Queensland tourism industry and local recreational interests. Key repaired destinations and facilities include:

- The Mt Bartle Frere walking tracks (East and West),
- The Misty Mountains track network (Palmerston, Ravenshoe and Tully trail heads)
- The Josephine falls to the Boulders walking trail
- Tully Gorge Day Use area and walking trails,
- The Nandroya falls walks,
- Hallorans Hill environmental park,
- Mount baldy walking track (Atherton)
- Lambs Head walking trails (Mareeba)

- Tinaroo camping areas (particularly Platypus creek camping area, Fong On Bay Camping area),
- Garners beach Cassowary protection and rehabilitation centre,
- The Bicton Hill walking trail,
- Lacey creek and Licuala Day Use areas and associated infrastructure
- Mt Tyson walking trail (Tully)
- The Mossman Gorge walking tracks

The speedy re-opening of many of these walking tracks and parks was crucial to the post-cyclone recovery of the local nature-based terrestrial tourism industry.

### **Park and Walking Track Recovery**

Anticipated dates of reopening for remaining parks and walking tracks are provided below. These dates are subject to further assessment and weather. (Note: some dates have been amended since previous report -- these are highlighted in bold). Any potential visitors should check current status of parks prior to visiting selected areas by going online at [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au) or by telephoning the QPWS Cairns Information Centre on (07) 4046 6600.

#### *Parks closed*

- Goldsborough Valley SF: Day use area (**2 January 2007**); Campground (**31 January 2007**); Goldfield trail (**31 May 2007**).
- Kirrama FR. Society Flats walking track closed. Access via the Kirrama Range closed by Cardwell Shire Council. Access will only be possible via Mt Garnet. (**10 December 2006**).

#### *Partial closures*

Barron Gorge NP: All tracks are open with the exception of the Douglas track between Kamerunga and McDonalds track. This section will remain closed until construction of the bridge and walking tracks is completed (**30 May 2007**).

Palmerston, Wooroonaoran NP: Walking tracks open as sign posted.

Tully Gorge Alcock SF: **Mt Tyson walking track now open but unmarked.** Note: Track is not suitable for inexperienced or unfit walkers.

Mt Bartle Frere trail, Wooroonaoran NP: **Eastern access tracks remain closed (31 January 2007);** western access track is now open from Junction Camp trailhead to the Summit. Walkers must be reminded they cannot walk beyond the Summit to descend via the eastern tracks.

#### Misty Mountains Trails:

- **The Cannabullen Creek track is closed. (31 January 2007).**
- Bally Knob track is open.
- Koolmoon Creek track from Koolmoon Creek Headwaters trailhead to Koolmoon Creek campsite and on to Rhyolite Pinnacle trailhead is open.
- Koolmoon Ck campsite is open.

- Koolmoon Creek track from Rhyolite Pinnacle trailhead to Rhyolite Pinnacle and out to Walter's Waterhole trailhead is open.
- Koolmoon Creek track from Walter's Waterhole trailhead to Walter's Waterhole and out to Djilgarrin trailhead is open.
- Walters Waterhole campsite is open.
- **The remainder of Koolmoon Creek track remains closed (31 January 2007).**
- The Cardwell Range track from the Cardwell Range trailhead to Major's Mountain only is open. **The remainder of Cardwell Range track remains closed (31 December 2006).**
- **Gorrell track remains closed (31 January 2007).**
- **The South Johnstone campsite, within Palmerston, Wooroonaoran National Park, is closed due to roadworks on K-Tree Road (28 February 2007).** Access from the West Palmerston Road via Maalan, Sutties Gap and Maple Creek roads remains closed indefinitely due to roadworks.
- The Cochable Creek campsite, Tully Gorge Alcock State Forest, is open. Access from Tully via Cardstone Road and "H" Road.
- All other campsites remain closed.

#### Wet Tropics Great Walk:

- Juwan Walk from Blencoe Falls is closed during the wet season from **1 December 2006 until 31 March 2007**. Flooding or high river levels during this time make the walk unsafe.
- Wallaman Falls walks to Yamanie and Henrietta Gate are open but may close at short notice during the wet season due to flooding.

#### **Cassowary Management**

Over the past month the post cyclone cassowary recovery program has experienced a reduction in activity in the Mission Beach/Tully area with fewer reported incidents and 3 feed stations being removed due to an absence of birds for 3-4 weeks.

However, the Innisfail area has experienced an upturn in reactive cassowary responses with 4 birds walking in to East Innisfail over the last few weeks and 2 deaths reported around Mourilyan (1 sub adult from a dog, 1 adult from a vehicle strike).

This increased localised movement may be related to vegetation die back on the Moresby Range. This die back is currently being investigated with a view to establishing additional temporary feed stations. The feeding station management program continues to be reviewed to vary location and number of feeding stations as required.

The cassowary recovery team appears to have saved an adult female in very poor condition caught 10 days ago at Moresby. As a consequence of enhanced care the bird's colour is returning, some shine is coming back in the coat and the feathers have stopped falling out as the bird scratches.

The QPWS cassowary response team remains at full strength (7 staff) to manage cassowary issues consistent with the State and Commonwealth accredited Cassowary

Recovery Plan. These employees continue to be supported by approximately 40 community volunteers engaged in donating fruit, preparing feed station food and servicing the 58 existing feed stations.

Approximately \$6000 per week is spent on purchasing fruit, servicing feed stations and the husbandry of cassowaries in care. Around 1300kg fruit is purchased weekly, with an additional 900kg being generously donated by community members and local business.

#### **Ongoing EPA Recovery Activities (over next few months)**

- EPA Cultural Heritage Branch to continue to monitor and provide technical advice as required on ongoing repairs to cyclone damaged properties listed on the State heritage register.
- EPA Environmental Operations to continue to monitor, regulate and provide technical advice on management of cyclone clean-up waste (green and industrial)
- QPWS to continue cassowary management including responding to reported incidents (negative human interaction, injured birds), maintain feeding stations, treat and rehabilitate sick and/or injured birds, maintain public education communication program. The supplementary feeding program will continue until forest recovery is sufficient to sustain cassowary population. Envisage that this may take at least another 6 months in some locations.
- QPWS to continue ongoing repairs to remaining damaged national parks and walking trails. Tourism sector and public provided with regular updates via email or web site updates. Most facilities envisaged to be repaired by the end of January, although some of the more remote long distance trails could require until the end of March (weather permitting).
- QPWS continue to monitor and manage secondary post-cyclone impacts such as fire, weed and feral animals (mainly feral pigs) on the protected area estate. Collaborate with other agencies as required for cross-tenure management responses.
- QPWS continue to work with Aboriginal Traditional Owners in relation to their concerns about impacts of the cyclone on cultural places and traditional fire regimes. This is a new project area so the scope and timeframes are as yet to be fully determined (see also following section)

## **SUMMARY OF MAJOR ISSUES**

### **Traditional Owner Issues**

A workshop aimed at identifying specific Traditional Owner fire and cultural place management concerns has been rescheduled from its original November date to 12 December (an emergency wildfire response made the original date unsuitable).

A proposal has been developed by the Aboriginal Rainforest Council (ARC) to develop a program of 5 targeted cyclone cleanup projects (across 5 clan groups) largely on protected area estate. Traditional owners have identified (albeit in general terms at this stage) a traditional responsibility to manage their respective cultural places affected by the cyclone. The ARC proposal is to resource the labour component (establishing a paid traditional owner workforce) through, for example, a DEIR sponsored labour market program. FNQNRM Ltd. will provide \$30,000 through *Landcare for Larry* to fund operational needs such as vehicles and fuel.

QPWS has flagged with both ARC and DEIR that an externally hosted CJP workforce could have significant liability implications for both QPWS and the host organisation. Nevertheless, traditional owners arguably have an existing s.211 Native Title Act right to manage their cultural places on the protected area estate. The type of management would need to be consistent with the provisions of the Native Title Act (including no commercial gain from on-park activities).

The issue of liability largely pertains to worker and park visitor safety and potential impacts on neighbours (e.g. if a fire escapes off the national park). However, potential impacts on World Heritage values if inappropriately managed could also be an area of concern to other stakeholders, including recreational groups, the conservation sector and the Commonwealth Government.

QPWS senior management continue to meet with traditional owners to further identify their specific post-cyclone recovery aspirations and to negotiate an agreed response.

## Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

### Operation Farm Clear

953 jobs logged

783 jobs assessed as eligible

585 logged jobs now completed across all primary industries

Most of the remaining jobs are contractor only jobs and Operation Farm Clear is on track to complete Community Jobs Plan crew clean up by Christmas.

### Operation Farm Clear - Workers

Community Job Plan Staff:

192 inducted

111 paid fortnight ending 6 December

The majority of Community Job Plan staff will be finishing with the project on 22 December 2007.

Many staff are now undertaking elective training to assist them get new employment. Career days are being organised with job network providers to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to transition into new employment.

Four crews comprising 20 staff will be retained into January to finish off any remaining jobs and assist with the ongoing clean up in forestry. Expressions of interest are being called from those staff that have not yet completed their 26 week Community Job Plan placement to take up these positions.

### Operation Farm Clear – Certificates

A presentation ceremony was held on Thursday, 30 November, at Walkamin Research Station where Regional Director, Eddie Gilbert handed out Certificates of Appreciation to Operation Farm Clear staff.

### Operation Farm Clear – Contractors

Operation Farm Clear continues to contract a range of other machinery and specialist labour to undertake clean up activities.

### Farm Forestry Cleanup

The farm forestry cleanup operation started late and will be ongoing into the New Year. It is being undertaken with contractors as it requires specialist skills and equipment. The database of jobs is currently managed by Private Forestry North Queensland. These are being transferred into the Operation Farm Clear database.

178 jobs logged

21 Jobs completed

10 Jobs in progress

28 Jobs yet to commence

78 Jobs yet to be assessed

41 jobs assessed and no further action required

## **QRAA Update**

### **QRAA (NDRA loan and grant)**

	<b>Primary Producer</b>	<b>Small Business</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Number approved (to date)	384	86	470
Being assessed	42	24	66
Total approved	\$79M	\$12M	\$91M

Source: QRAA

For the period to 1 December 2006

### **Business Information Centre**

49 calls during the period 17 November - 30 November 2006. The Business Information Centre will be operating during normal working hours over the Christmas holiday period.

### **Media**

Fear that Siam weed may be getting out of control after Cyclone as loss of tree canopies in Innisfail and Tully makes germination easier for weeds like Siam. (ABC Rural Far North, Thursday 30 November)

### **Sugar Industry**

All cane should be harvested by mid December (unless there were significant rainfall events). Mill areas that have finished crushing are: Mossman, Mulgrave, Tully (all cooperative owned mills).

Compared with estimates at the beginning of the year, the tonnage is down by up to 23%, and the CCS is down at least 1 unit. The Tableland mill and Innisfail area mills owned by Bundaberg Sugar (Babinda, South Johnstone, and closed Mourilyan), are continuing to crush as quickly as possible given the wet weather and dirt load/poor quality of cane supply.

Standover of cane may occur where the current crop has been condemned for harvest.

### **Primary Industries Forum**

The Minister has been invited to attend and address a Primary Industries Forum to be held at the Walkamin research Station on the Atherton Tablelands on Tuesday, 13 February 2007. Tablelands Futures Corporation has entered into an agreement with the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries to use the Walkamin Research Station facilities and this will be their first major event there. The Forum is part of the department's longer term commitment to industry recovery.

### **Banana Industry**

Banana availability is increasing and prices are falling. Retailers are advertising heavily, including full page advertisements in a major paper. Industry recovery progress continues to be reported in news stories, especially regional press.

**Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW)**

**Preventative Waterway Debris Removal (refer following detailed progress report)**

- Preventative Waterway Debris Removal works commenced with \$600,626 in an initial series of start up bundles of work awarded for the prevention of damage to public and primary industry related infrastructure by vegetation debris deposited in watercourses. Second bundles of the order of \$1million are envisaged to be recommended by the end of this week. Cairns and Cardwell Trusts are now well advanced in performing the first bundle. Overall progress is approximately 30% of the first bundle.
- Most shires and trusts have opted to perform the work utilising inhouse supervision supported local contractors and CJP programme and council staff
- Johnstone Shire River Trust has still not proposed a reasonable project plan for completion of its task and has yet to commence any debris clearing activities despite having been given considerable support by the project officer in scoping their work and proposals for utilisation of Operation Farm Clear supervisory staff. The Taskforce is requested to help expedite that Trust's response to this issue.
- Referrals of PWDR project workscopes are being coordinated with other sections of NRW and other state government agencies that administer different legislation. They include Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Vegetation Management Unit, and the Land Protection Unit. Necessary approvals are not currently delaying the issue of any further bundles of work.
- Aerial photography of the cyclone affected area continues to assist in Vegetation Management Act assessments.

**PREVENTATIVE WATERWAY DEBRIS REMOVAL**

**PROGRESS REPORT 5/12/2006**

**ATHERTON SHIRE COUNCIL:**

- 1 Commencing work on 6<sup>th</sup> December. The council has a first bundle of work sites approval to a total value of \$127,776.
- 2 Council has advised arrangements have been made to obtain a CJP (unemployment training programme) project to overcome labour resourcing problems. A combination of experienced council staff and CJP people along with local contractors will allow 4 crews to be engaged in waterway debris removal.
- 3 Second bundle of work sites approval should be forwarded to council in the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> December.
- 4 The council intends to adhere strictly to the approved guidelines for the waterway debris removal avoiding any clearing of existing vegetation to gain access to debris sites.

**EACHAM SHIRE COUNCIL:**

- 1 Commencing work on 6<sup>th</sup> December. Utilising existing council staff to work down streams cutting up debris for removal without requiring clearing of existing vegetation for access purposes.
- 2 Council has first bundle of work sites approval to a total value of \$116,600. A second bundle approval totalling \$70,400 has been prepared at the specific request of council staff. This second bundle approval will allow the council to efficiently deal with the North Johnstone River and Theresa Creek waterway debris removal.

#### **CAIRNS RIVER IMPROVEMENT TRUST:**

- 1 The trust is working on the first bundle of approved work sites to a value of \$115,250. The Trust now has 6 crews mobilised.
- 2 All necessary checking has been done for a second bundle of 20 work sites. The letter of approval will leave this office by the end of the week.
- 3 The trust is strictly applying the approved guidelines to the waterway debris removal. As a result avoidance of any clearing of existing vegetation for the purpose of access to debris work sites is being achieved.

#### **JOHNSTONE SHIRE RIVER IMPROVEMENT TRUST:**

- 1 Have yet to commence work. Have approval for a first bundle of work sites to a total value of \$135,000.
- 2 The trust has submitted a list of work sites for a second bundle approval. As these sites have not been assessed by the trust because of resource problems NRW Project Officer is utilising local knowledge to arrange for referral agency assessment. Once referral agency assessments have been obtained a letter of approval will be forwarded.

#### **CARDWELL SHIRE RIVER IMPROVEMENT TRUST:**

- 1 Cardwell trust commenced work on 27 November 2006 with two crews on their first bundle of approved work sites for a value of \$106,000.
- 2 The trust has submitted a revised list of work sites for approval. The additional work sites have to be assessed by the referral agencies. Once the referral agencies assessments are available a letter of approval for a second bundle of work sites will be forwarded anticipated to be early next week.

## Transport Portfolio

### Overview of Current Activities

#### Department of Main Roads

Main Roads and JSC staff have conducted an audit on the place name signs and the few missing signs have now been ordered. These ordered signs have arrived and been erected during the month.

#### Queensland Transport

A possible special case for subsidised bus travel was asked to be investigated by the Task Force for an elderly couple relocated from Innisfail to Edmonton whilst repairs were being carried out to their damaged home. After advice from Dept Communities and the Passenger Transport Unit it was decided to reject the request and advise the couple to claim the travel expenses from their insurance company. Their insurance company is already paying for the temporary accommodation.

Queensland Transport continues to assist Johnstone Shire Council with the Johnstone River Planning Study and with assessment and repair of cyclone related damage at the Innisfail Aerodrome.

#### Conclusion

All the recovery tasks for the Transport Portfolio have now been completed. QT will continue to work with and assist the ORMG when and as required.

No Status Report was submitted.

**ORMG Agencies planned dates for Christmas closures.**

**Building Coordination Centre**

BCC will close 3pm Friday 22nd Dec and reopen 02-01-07 at 8:30am

**Health**

Initial contact should be with the Hospital in the Districts, who will then refer if necessary.

- Innisfail Hospital general number is 4061 5411
- Babinda Hospital general number is 4067 8200
- Tully Hospital general number is 4068 4144
- Atherton Hospital general number is 4091 0211
- Mareeba hospital general number is 4092 2322

**Qbuild**

No closures for Qbuild

**Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F)**

Office closure from 22<sup>nd</sup> December through to 2nd January

**Department of Natural Resources and Water**

Office closure from 22<sup>nd</sup> December through to 2nd January

**Wayne Coutts  
Co-ordinator  
Operation Recovery Management Group**