

## Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie – Working Together

We are proud of our work in response to disasters. It is at these times that we see how well our agency pulls together to do what needs to be done. This year, our staff worked tirelessly in the lead up to, and aftermath of Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie, to help people in affected communities like Proserpine, Bowen, and Mackay to access vital support and recovery services.

Motivated by a desire to help their fellow Queenslanders, staff from across the department showed dedication and compassion as they came together in a massive coordinated effort to provide support to those who needed it most.

As the cyclone intensified in late March 2017, Housing Service Centre staff worked around the clock providing advice and support to vulnerable public housing tenants as well as housing support to the broader community in areas likely to be impacted by the cyclone. Staff flew from Brisbane to Cairns, Townsville and Mackay to support their local colleagues on the ground, and other support staff prepared to help where needed.

Six experts in disaster coordination, logistics and communication were deployed to the State Disaster Coordination Centre at Kedron to strengthen the Government's response team. Over 350 staff from business areas were deployed to affected areas for response and recovery activities.

In the immediate aftermath of the cyclone the recovery effort was in full swing, with a focus on helping people deal with the impacts while maintaining the safety of staff and the public as the highest priority. The different areas of HPW worked seamlessly together with a shared purpose of helping those most in need.

Building and Asset Services' (BAS) team of condition assessors undertook their Rapid Damage Assessments of buildings and government assets and arranged to carry out necessary repairs. From Tuesday 4 April 2017, BAS also undertook Structural Assistance Grant Assessments.

Over 2,300 properties were damaged across the state as a result of the cyclone and flooding. A total of 146 contractors undertook around 4,000 repair jobs on government building assets state-wide.

The Government's fleet provider, QFleet also played a vital role in supplying urgently needed vehicles to agencies involved in the disaster recovery effort following Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

QFleet arranged for the transportation of vehicles to Townsville to assist with community recovery work. The team also identified and prepared other roadworthy vehicles for possible deployment, and contacted vehicle manufacturers to see what vehicles were available at dealerships in Ayr, Bowen, Proserpine, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton.

Short-term emergency accommodation was provided for 171 people affected by the cyclone including 31 people evacuated to Cairns and 106 tourists who were holidaying in the Whitsundays when Tropical Cyclone Debbie struck.

Housing support staff had a strong presence at Disaster Recovery Hubs in Bowen, Proserpine, Cannonvale and Mackay in addition to having some outreach teams in the northern beaches area. In a huge effort, Housing Services staff also visited or checked in with over 600 public housing tenants ranging from the Far North to south-east Queensland, to ensure they were safe.

HPW staff also answered the call for Ready Reservists, with 42 staff deployed to help in the recovery effort. Ready reservists play a key role in areas such as meeting and greeting people impacted by disasters, and helping affected householders to complete financial assistance application forms.

Our passion for helping Queenslanders in need also drives us to look at new and innovative ways of responding in the face of natural disasters. One of our dedicated staff members developed an inspection tool that enabled assessors to provide accurate early reports on damage to BAS customer assets in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

The department continued to work with other agencies to assess learnings from the event and implement changes to better prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impacts of future events.

