20 February 2002
Government activates natural disaster relief arrangements

The Territory Government has activated Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) in the flood-affected Katherine and Victoria River regions, Minister for Police, Fire & Emergency Services Syd Stirling said today.

"A tropical low across the Top End has caused widespread flooding in the Katherine region over the past week, resulting in damage to roads and public buildings," Mr Stirling said.

"The Stuart Highway has been damaged and closed at certain sections, while the Victoria Highway is currently cut in several places.

"While it will take time to assess the level of damage, and necessary restoration, enough damage has occurred to activate the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements.

"Police and Emergency Services are keeping government up-to-date on events and Minister John Ah Kit experienced the situation first hand during a visit to the Katherine region earlier this week."

NDRA is a Territory/Commonwealth program designed to share the cost of relief and assistance, and help communities re-establish themselves following a natural disaster.

The Northern Territory Treasurer may activate NDRA for a particular region without the declaration of a State of Emergency or State of Disaster.

"While no clear estimate of the damage is available yet, the cost will clearly exceed the $0.2 million dollar threshold required to activate the arrangements," Mr Stirling said.

"Counter-disaster operation costs will also be covered by NDRA.

"The Katherine and Victoria River regions have an unfortunate history of flooding, with the devastation caused by the 1998 floods still fresh in people’s minds.

"While a repeat of flooding on that scale is highly unlikely at this stage, we are only mid-way into the wet season and government wants to be well prepared for any eventuality.

"By activating NDRA, Katherine residents can rest assured that the government will be there to provide the support they need."

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