



The media scrum in Innisfail just days after TC Larry struck. Look very closely and you'll see that CDRS Disaster Management Officer Glenn Alderton is the centre of attention.

Media staff help spread the word

The coming and going of TC Larry was certainly no secret, as evidenced by the extensive local, national and international media coverage it attracted.

Working behind the scenes to distribute critical public safety messages and ensure a smooth flow of operational information to media outlets was the department's own team of Media Officers from the Public Affairs and Communications Unit (PACU).

Operating on a 24-hour roster, PACU officers were stationed in the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Brisbane, and on the ground in Far North Queensland, before TC Larry had even crossed the coast.

In the following 14 days, Media Officers conducted more than 450 interviews, including more

than 100 with international media organisations including the BBC, CNN, NBC and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

They coordinated more than 60 press conferences and facilitated more than 1000 interviews with operational personnel.

They also operated on the disaster ground in Innisfail and its surrounds, where dozens of journalists, television crews and photographers had gathered to chronicle the relief effort.

Parts of Innisfail became something of a 'media circus' as all four free-to-air television stations and several radio networks set up temporary bases in the town.

PACU Director Bob Hammill said unit staff had performed admirably under trying conditions.

"We have a small team and there is an expectation from media organisations that we will be available for them 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week," Bob said.

"Our staff managed a number of difficult media situations and provided support to everyone from CDRS Executive Director Frank Pagano to Premier Peter Beattie, Emergency Services Minister Pat Purcell, General Peter Cosgrove, Johnstone Shire Mayor Neil Clarke and all of the operational personnel who were deployed to the disaster zone.

"They also provided a significant amount of safety and cyclone awareness information that helped the public prepare for the event."

QAS deploys staff from across Qld

When Tropical Cyclone Larry swept through the far north, the resulting devastation not only highlighted the resilience of the people of this region, but the preparedness and professionalism of emergency services personnel.

The Queensland Ambulance Service deployed 90 people from across the State, including paramedics, officers and administration staff, to the region to assist in the relief effort.

The State Operations Coordination Centre staffed 56 QAS shifts for the purpose of providing a coordinated,

whole-of-QAS response as part of the Queensland Government and Department of Emergency Services State Disaster Plan.

Acting Deputy Commissioner Barry Malone is usually based in the far north and was overwhelmed by the support.

"QAS staff were deployed from around the State to support staff in the affected region and allow local crews to overcome fatigue," he said.

"These were difficult circumstances with many staff from other regions having to live in sub-standard

conditions as the clean-up effort continued and always with no complaints.

"Not to mention the Far Northern Region staff who had to not only cope with the impact and immediate post-impact response stage, but in some cases not being able to check on their own loved ones or the state of their own homes.

"We tend to forget these people that worked through the cyclone and I want to say it was a magnificent effort all round."