Call for more help after Lam

**Arnhem on tough road to recovery**

By MEGAN PALIN

THE recovery operation in remote Territory communities affected by Cyclone Lam has brought out the best of the human spirit but Defence Force troops should have been sent in to assist with the clean-up effort, according to an indigenous organisation.

Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) chief executive Alastair King said he was surprised the Australian Army had not been sent into the northern Arnhem Land region.

"We’ve got Robertson Barracks right here in Darwin and they’re sending troops into Queensland to help with the clean-up after Cyclone Marcia," Mr King said.

"We’re surprised we haven’t heard from the Federal Government about sending troops into Arnhem Land because it’s been hit hard."

Thousands of people were displaced after hundreds of homes in Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi and Ramingining were damaged or destroyed as Lam tore through the Top End last Thursday and Friday.

Dozens of Northern Territory Emergency Services volunteers have been assisting with the clean-up since Friday.

The Government yesterday extended the State of Emergency declared for the parts of the Top End hardest hit by TC Lam for a further three days. Emergency Service Minister Peter Chandler said this would assist emergency personnel with restoring facilities and services.

Mr King said more help was needed on the ground because of the sheer volume of damage and destruction. "A lot of people are still in shelters," he said.

"We’re surprised we haven’t heard from the Federal Government about sending troops into Arnhem Land because it’s been hit hard."

Power has been restored to some businesses and homes across the region but many remain without.

Mr King said ALPA supermarkets in the affected communities were now stocked with food but power outages had restricted Eftpos and ATM transactions.

"Elcho Island has lost communications (again yesterday) and we are hearing that we may not get them back for days... we need the coms for Eftpos," Mr King said yesterday. "The same has just happened at Milingimbi but they have mobile coverage."

Territorians have rallied behind the relief effort with more than $15k raised online by independent organisers to go towards supplies and rebuilding. Privately owned organisations have also contributed to the cause.

"ALPA has distributed our own food relief vouchers, $50 per person, to four of the affected communities," Mr King said.

"That was about $25k across the communities we put up straight away because as soon as the doors opened we needed to give to people to put food in their bellies or whatever they needed."

Power and Water spokeswoman Suzanne Gulikers said the majority of power lines to properties affected by Lam will be in place by week’s end.

Chief Minister Adam Giles said the Government was working yesterday to identify immediate housing solutions for people who were still in cyclone shelters and didn’t have homes to return to.

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