

Cyclone haven pledge not met four years on

ONLY one of the cyclone shelters the State Government promised for every coastal community has been built, in Innisfail.

The finished shelter is located at Innisfail State College and doubles as a performing arts centre, which was devastated by the category four storm in 2006.

Opposition emergency services spokesman Ted Malone said while communities were being warned by forecasters to prepare for the worst cyclone season in 40 years, the Bligh Government had not delivered on a 2006 election promise.

"Little has been done since (then premier) Peter Beattie stood in the devastation at Innisfail in 2006 and promised a series of cyclone shelters along the coast," he said.

Meteorologists have predicted a tropical cyclone could form off the coast before Christmas, forecasting as many as six cyclones could threaten North Queensland.

In Townsville, the \$14.6 million RSL Stadium at Murray Sports Complex, due to be completed next year and funded by all three tiers of government, will also function as a post-disaster relief recovery centre in the event of a serious cyclone or other catastrophic event.

The State Government also announced Townsville would be one of three Queensland centres to receive a disaster management warehouse for emergency equipment such as tarpaulins, ropes, generators and other equipment to be stored.

The first of the warehouses has already been established at Gold Coast with the Townsville and Brisbane warehouses to be delivered between 2011 and 2012.



WINNERS . . . Isis Symes leads Soil Engineering Services in the Achieve Corporate Outrigger Challenge Photo: SUZANNE LOWE

Corporates battle it out to support cancer charity

THE competition may have been fierce as 26 local businesses battled it out for outrigger supremacy yesterday, but the real winner was a Townsville charity determined to cure cancer.

The Cure Starts Now director Ren Pedersen said the Achieve Corporate Outrigger Challenge would have raised between \$6000 and \$10,000 for his independent Townsville arm of the international charity.

Mr Pedersen said The Cure Starts Now raised money for paediatric brain cancer research, which had the potential to be applied to a cure for all cancers.

He said the charity was even further buoyed by the generosity of first place-getters, Redskins Touch Football, who donated their \$1000 prize to the charity.

Mr Pedersen said while he was pleased with the amount raised, a corporate event like the outrigger

challenge had an even greater purpose. "We're not just about raising money, we're about raising interest with corporates on the day," Mr Pedersen said.

"At the end of the day, we're not going to cure kids' brain cancer through rattling tins and selling sausages."

Director of the event's sponsor Achieve Business and Recruitment Solutions, Anita Hagarty said the event was a success.

"The weather was fantastic, all the teams had a great time and we raised a decent amount," she said.

Although Redskins took out the honours, they were followed by teams from The Cure Starts Now (2nd), Fit Solutions (3rd), Soil Engineering Services (4th) and McDonald Leong Lawyers (5th).

Mr Pedersen urged local businesses to contact him on 0413 318 425 to support the charity.

— NATHAN PAULL

Diner cries foul after restaurant eviction for alleged 'useless fat cow' jibe

Fight over food service

BROOKE BASKIN



A WOMAN who was kicked out of Cactus Jack's on Flinders St East for allegedly calling a waitress a "useless, fat cow" will be allowed back in because the customer is always right.

The incident has sparked a debate on how far diners are allowed to go before being in the wrong.

A manager at the restaurant told Kate Ricketts, 25, to hit the road on Wednesday and never to come back after she allegedly caused a waitress to break down in tears.

He even offered to pay for her meal on the condition she never returned to the Flinders St restaurant.

The manager, who acted to protect a member of his staff, has since been reprimanded by the company's head honcho, who says he acted against company policy when he kicked Ms Ricketts out.

The owner said the customer was always right and invited the diner back.

Ms Ricketts contacted the *Townsville Bulletin* because



ALLOWED BACK . . . Kate Ricketts outside the restaurant in Palmer St

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she was outraged by the treatment she had received from staff.

She said she was too afraid to go back in case someone "spat in her food".

Ms Ricketts said she was a regular customer and went for dinner or lunch roughly once a week. Her problems started more than a month ago when she complained about her meal. "When I said something to the man-

ager, she rolled her eyes, grabbed our food and flounced off with it," she said. "Because the meals were wrong and cooked incorrectly, I refused to pay full price because it wasn't what we ordered."

"Since then, the venue manager and I just haven't seen eye to eye."

Ms Ricketts visited the restaurant with a friend for lunch on Wednesday and

was allegedly reprimanded by the manager for the way she had behaved. "Apparently I had created such a scene the weekend manager wanted to quit," she said.

"He told me I wasn't in Melbourne and shouldn't expect silver service."

"He offered to pay for my meals on the proviso I never come back into the store and bother his staff."

Cactus Jack's owner Jon

Van Grinsven said the customer was welcome back into any of the city's stores.

He said the Flinders St manager was in the wrong.

"The manager acted contrary to company policy which is, the customer is always right — even when they are wrong," he said.

Mr Van Grinsven said he was happy to discuss any problems with his staff with Ms Ricketts personally.

CUSTOMERS: HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

- 1 Keep a receipt which lists location, time of service, the amount you paid and the server's name.
- 2 Go online and find the restaurant's homepage. Look for the "contact us" link and fill out the form. List the date and time of service, cost, and explain what happened. If the food was uncooked, say so. If the server was rude or lazy, say so and give an example of the behaviour. Let them know how disappointed you are in the establishment and if you've had good service there in the past, include that as a point of reference so they'll know you're not a professional complainer.
- 3 Write that you look forward to speaking with them about this matter via email or phone at their earliest convenience.
- 4 If you don't hear back within two weeks, resubmit the letter.

STAFF: DEALING WITH PROBLEM CUSTOMERS

- 1 Stay calm and remember, it's not personal. Let them talk as long as they need to, not only to get it off their chest, but to thoroughly explain the problem. Listen carefully.
- 2 Apologise and empathise. Once you understand why the customer is upset, apologise, even if you don't agree with their complaint, you are at least letting them know you validate them and will work towards a resolution.
- 3 Resolve their problem, not yours. Your business should have policies in place to prepare people working the front lines to deal with customer service issues. If the disgruntled customer has made it clear what will satisfy him, then do everything within your power to accommodate that customer.
- 4 Follow up. Whatever promises you make to the customer to resolve the issue, follow up. Call when you said you would call, even if you don't have the resolution, let the customer know you're sticking to your word.
- 5 Learn from mistakes. Dealing with an unpleasant customer should be a learning experience. Customer feedback should be viewed as an opportunity for change.

"He acted contrary to written policy, whatever the motivation or the reason, and we don't always get it right," he said.

"However, if the lady has an issue she wants resolved all she needs to do is pick up the phone and sort it out."

"All she needed to do was ask for my number at head office and I am very happy to resolve any disputes, whatever their nature."