



DESTROYED . . . the damage on Rankin Street, Innisfail as seen from the air yesterday

Photo: THE AUSTRALIAN

# Complete devastation

FAR north Queensland was reeling last night after a cyclone likened to an atomic bomb ripped through the area, damaging thousands of buildings and devastating crops.

The Innisfail region bore the brunt of Cyclone Larry's 290kph winds as it tore roofs from buildings and flattened or uprooted trees.

Hundreds of millions of dollars damage was inflicted as the powerful storm also destroyed most of Australia's banana crop and flattened sugar cane fields.

But amazingly, no one was killed, and authorities reported fewer than 10 people taken to hospital with minor injuries, mostly from flying debris.

Authorities had evacuated more than 1000 residents in the lead-up to the storm.

Acting Queensland Ambulance Service commissioner Neil Kirby said he was "absolutely astounded" at the low injury rate.

But around half the buildings in the town of Innisfail were damaged, emergency services estimated, while smaller towns in the

region also took the brunt of the cyclone. "The property damage has been immense," Premier Peter Beattie said.

"We haven't had a cyclone like this for decades, if we've ever had one like it before."

Homes were smashed and trees flattened as the category five cyclone hit the coast in the early hours of this morning.

"It sounded like the exorcist coming to get you - it was terrifying," Innisfail Barrier Reef Motel owner Amanda Fitzpatrick said.

"We could only go out in the eye

of the storm and have a look and it just looks like an atomic bomb has gone off."

Residents said they were terrified when the storm hit.

"It's just frightening. I don't get scared much but this is something to make any man tremble in his boots," said Innisfail resident Des Hensler.

Graeme Wollington, of Innisfail, added: "It was an absolutely crazy last night. It started about 3am and there was glass and tin flying everywhere."

CONTINUED PAGE 6

## Ready to rebuild

LARRY may have smashed up our town but he won't break our spirit, Innisfail Advocate manager Kellie Harrison said yesterday. "We at the Innisfail Advocate have dusted ourselves off and produced a special edition of your local paper - and it's free. There are a thousand stories of devastation, courage and mateship emerging from the carnage of Cyclone Larry. The Innisfail Advocate will bring you these stories in the coming weeks as we all begin rebuilding our community."