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LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr JP Lister MP—Chair
Mr AJ Baillie MP
Ms NA Boyd MP
Mr MA Boothman MP
Mr MPT Healy MP
Mrs ME Nightingale MP

Staff present:

Ms M Westcott—Committee Secretary
Mr Z Dadic—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—BRIEFING WITH THE QUEENSLAND RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 21 May 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 21 MAY 2025

The committee met at 9.32 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this general briefing with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. My name is James Lister, member for Southern Downs and chair of this committee. Other committee members with me here today are: the deputy chair, Margie Nightingale, the member for Inala; Adam Baillie, the member for Townsville; Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Nikki Boyd, the member for Pine Rivers, who is substituting for the member for Lytton—thank you for joining us, Nikki; and Michael Healy, the member for Cairns.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee. I remind committee members that officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and my direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn off your mobile phones or put them on to silent mode.

ELLWOOD, Major General Jake (Retd) DSC AM CSC, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

NEHILL, Mr Andrew, Chief Financial Officer, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

VARSANI, Ms Vina, General Manager, Resilience and Recovery, Queensland Reconstruction Authority

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority who have been invited to brief the committee. General, would you like to give the committee a briefing?

Mr Ellwood: Good morning and thank you, Chair and committee members, for the invitation to present to you today. Since 2011 Queensland has been impacted by 133 disaster events including massive floods, catastrophic bushfires and severe tropical cyclones that have resulted in billions of dollars of damage and, tragically, loss of life. The Queensland Reconstruction Authority was established under the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011 following the devastating Queensland floods and the category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasi in January and February of 2011. Those twin disasters caused an estimated \$6.6 billion in damage to essential public infrastructure and many billions more in insurance claims and economic losses.

In 2015 the QRA was made a permanent part of the Queensland government as the state's lead agency for disaster recovery and resilience policy. The QRA Act was also amended in 2019 and again in 2024 to reflect the QRA's role and responsibilities to lead recovery and resilience across all hazards. Since its establishment in early 2011, the QRA has managed more than \$30 billion in recovery and resilience works funded under the joint Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, commonly referred to as DRFA, and its predecessor, the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. The DRFA has four categories—A, B, C and D—with each activated consecutively and in line with the scale of the disaster. Category A and B focus on personal hardship, counterdisaster assistance and the reconstruction of essential public assets. To put this in context, in 2024-25 alone, 73 of Queensland's 77 council regions have been activated for DRFA assistance across 17 disaster events. Under category A and B, more than \$137.1 million in immediate hardship assistance has been distributed to date, benefiting almost 673,000 people.

Following significant natural disasters, the QRA activates extraordinary assistance under category C and D of the DRFA that can include grants to primary producers, small businesses and not for profits, as well as targeted packages that can support recovery of infrastructure, the environment, sport, community facilities, water infrastructure, industries like tourism, and of course boosting mental health services. Queensland's experience in natural disasters means we can activate packages under these categories that are tried, tested and successful in enabling recovery. These programs include the ongoing Betterment to strengthen our regional roads and bridges and the successful \$741 million Resilient Homes Fund that includes a voluntary homes buyback program that has removed 685 homes from high-risk flood zones following the 2021-22 southern Queensland flooding event.

The disasters of 2024-25—including the North and Far North tropical low in January and February, Tropical Cyclone Alfred and the Western Queensland surface trough—have seen more than \$712 million in category C and D extraordinary packages made available to address all aspects of recovery, including: community clean-up; roads and transport restoration; primary producer, small business and not-for-profit organisation support; environmental recovery; tourism industry support; community health and mental health; and sport and community recreational assets recovery. The QRA is currently managing an active reconstruction program under the DRFA estimated at approximately \$13.3 billion comprising works from 58 events since 2019. The program is not only significant in scale but has the added challenge of being spread over a very broad geographic area, with many delivery agents, asset owners, specific delivery dates and complex scope.

The QRA's regional liaison and resilience and recovery officers provide support and advice to all of Queensland's 77 councils. Through this officer network, the QRA works closely with councils to ensure that both delivery agents are supported and projects are delivered in timeframes that ensure recovery is as swift as possible and capability is built to enable resilience to future disasters. The QRA also coordinates recovery and resilience at the local level through state-led functional recovery and resilience groups that manage and implement activities across the five functional lines of recovery and resilience—roads and transport, built, economic, environment, and human and social. The QRA also works collaboratively with agencies and stakeholders to reduce risk, increase resilience and improve preparedness for disasters through coordinated programs such as Get Ready Queensland and 'If it's flooded, forget it'.

The QRA reports directly to the minister for fire and disaster recovery and is governed by the Queensland Reconstruction Board. I was appointed to the role of chief executive officer in March 2023 following the work I undertook as the State Recovery Coordinator during the 2022 southern Queensland floods. As the chief executive officer, I am also the State Recovery Policy and Planning Coordinator which, in essence, is a standing State Recovery Coordinator. This role assists with the effective recovery of communities, bridging the gap between response and recovery and ensuring government entities and the community are better prepared for recovery operations. The Queensland Reconstruction Board oversees the QRA's operations and is chaired by Katarina Carroll, along with seven other members with collective experience and expertise in disaster response, resilience, engineering and regional planning. The board's key functions are to seek the QRA's strategic priorities and ensure the QRA performs its functions in an appropriate, effective and efficient way.

Following significant disaster events, the Queensland government may appoint a state recovery coordinator to spearhead community recovery. Earlier this year the Premier appointed three state recovery coordinators following the devastating disaster events—Andrew Cripps for the North and Far North tropical low, Justin O'Connor for ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred and Stuart Mackenzie for the Western Queensland surface trough and associated flooding weather event. SRCs are responsible for identifying specific recovery needs of impacted communities, providing strategic advice to government agencies, regular updates about recovery operations and leading the development of a state recovery and resilience plan. The SRCs work closely with the QRA, impacted councils and the federal government to ensure a complete recovery from a disaster.

As you can appreciate, every disaster is unique and I am sure many of you have experienced a disaster firsthand or been impacted by these recent events. As the lead agency for resilience policy in this state, the QRA works with our stakeholders to lead activities that make resilience building a key priority for Queensland. Since the responsibility for state level hazard and risk functions transitioned to the QRA, there has been a much greater focus on disaster preparedness. In recognition of the importance of locally-led recovery and resilience and a focus on all hazards, the QRA has undertaken a different approach to facilitate assessments of disaster risks at the local level. This approach uses new methodologies and GIS-based tools to support disaster risk management

planning at local and district scales. This tool being developed will assist local governments to recognise and capture risks which can then be translated to activities within their local recovery action plans.

The QRA and the Queensland government are committed to ensuring wherever and whenever disaster strikes our communities receive the support they need to get back on their feet. I again thank the committee for the opportunity to present today and now I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Sir. I am sure the committee is aware of how busy you have been with two major natural disasters already this year and it is great to have you with us.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you for appearing here today and thank you for the great work that is being done. Those 133 disasters are a lot. Can you advise the committee if Mr Andrew Cripps was listed on the State Recovery Coordinator register held by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority at any point prior to his appointment as State Recovery Coordinator on 12 February?

Mr Ellwood: We have a list. It is not exhaustive and it is not definitive, but he was not on that list, as I am aware. Again, it really is a matter of ensuring that we have people with particular skill sets at a given time.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: So he was not on that list at the time?

Mr Ellwood: No, he was not is my understanding.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Just looking at your disaster recovery grants for local governments in the report dealing with 2022-23 to 2023-24, you mention the Gold Coast city council—that is in my region—where almost \$22 million was allocated. Where was that money spent? What types of grants did the QRA give the local government? Out of curiosity, can we have a bit of a breakdown of how that money was spent for the Gold Coast city council?

Mr Ellwood: I would have to see the detail of the grants you are referring to. I am very happy to take it on notice. We obviously have a range of different grants that span from small businesses to primary producers to not-for-profit organisations. Then under category D we can have other grants that are made available. I would have to take that on notice.

Mr BOOTHMAN: My main question is about what actually transpired. That would have been the Christmas Day storm which caused a trail of devastation across the northern Gold Coast.

Mr Ellwood: Yes.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I know it would be outside your scope, but were there any discussions about what type of preventive measures we could take to better ensure our power networks and telecommunication networks could be a lot more resilient to these types of events?

Mr Ellwood: Out of all of these events we continually look to identify where there might be weak spots. For something like power—and as you know, it was an absolutely extraordinary event that we saw that tore down in excess of 100 kilometres of electrical line. Under our State Recovery and Resilience Plan we will endeavour to work with, in this case, energy providers to see where there might be things we can do. A case in point is we are working to see what can be done from this most recent event. As you know, the power station at Ingham went under water, so we are working with the energy organisation to see what fixes we can put in place that will ensure that power is guaranteed. It is very difficult when it is so widespread. As I said, we are talking about many kilometres. One thing I would say, having been on the ground during that event and indeed the surrounding events—the event in the north and Kiriya—is that Ergon and Energex made sure they had entities prepositioned ready to reconnect power, and I must say they really did an amazing job to get power restored so quickly given the vast destruction.

Mr BOOTHMAN: With the Alfred event in the Gold Coast region, yes, it was not as devastating as that tornado type event. However, having those units on the ground ensured power was put back on very quickly and very efficiently. We certainly learnt.

Mr Ellwood: The thing I noticed is they were very keen to make sure they had the priorities right and they had forces positioned. They had sensed what was coming. I think they have been quite good in reading the game in terms of where to preposition.

Ms BOYD: I note that Mr Andrew Cripps was not listed on the State Recovery Coordinator register held by the QRA prior to his appointment on 12 February while he was a National Party Senate candidate. Did you as the CEO of the QRA make any recommendations to the Premier regarding either potential appointees to the role of State Recovery Coordinator for the North and Far North tropical low including any individuals who were, in fact, listed on the state recovery coordinator register?

CHAIR: Before you answer that question, Major General Ellwood, the committee understands that there are certain matters that you are unable to discuss, particularly if it concerns confidential advice provided to government. I will give you some latitude in answering that question in the way you see appropriate.

Mr Ellwood: What I will say is for each of the three events I did not talk to individuals. I talked to the particular capabilities of the types of things where I felt there would be key issues—for example, in the west it was someone who very much understood primary production; in the north, someone who understood that region; for the south, someone who understood small businesses. To me it was not about the personality; it was about the knowledge and the function and the potential value-add. Across the three state recovery coordinators it is very useful to have individuals who can be with the community talking to the community. In the early days I try to be there as much as I can, being the standing State Recovery Coordinator, but I cannot be everywhere. I do not think I could provide sufficient attention, particularly not with three massive events.

Ms BOYD: Were you aware that Mr Cripps was a National Party Senate candidate at the time of his appointment? Was this the first time since 2015 that there has been a political appointment to one of these roles?

CHAIR: I will ask you to rephrase that question please, member for Pine Rivers. It contains some imputations and political overtones. Remember, we are dealing with public sector officers, not members of parliament. If you have anything political you should raise it in the House.

Ms BOYD: In your role as the CEO of the QRA were you aware that Mr Andrew Cripps was a Senate candidate for the National Party in Queensland when he was appointed?

Mr Ellwood: No, I was not. To be honest, my focus was on the community and recovery at the time. I understood it would be Andrew Cripps. That was all I knew.

Ms BOYD: For the committee's understanding, was this the first time there has been a political appointment in one of these roles in the QRA's history?

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, I invite you to rephrase your question. You have again loaded that question with political connotations. You have described a political appointment. That is not an appropriate tone to use with a public sector officer before us.

Ms BOYD: Thank you for your guidance, Chair. Was this the first time that a Senate candidate for the National Party has been appointed to a role of this importance within the QRA?

Mr Ellwood: I could not tell you. I would not be able to say. I do not have a list of who has been state recovery coordinators previously. I could not accurately provide you with an answer here today.

Ms BOYD: Could you look into that and come back to us?

Mr Ellwood: Yes, we absolutely can.

Ms BOYD: Thank you so much.

CHAIR: Actually, I disagree. I feel that you are rootling around in political matters, member for Pine Rivers. If you wish to take issue or seek information, you should do that through the minister or on the floor of the House. Major General, you do not have to comply with that request and I recommend you do not.

Ms BOYD: Thank you. We note your willingness to undertake that work and come back to us, but that you are no longer able to do that, Major General.

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, you are not verbal witnesses before us. Major General Ellwood is a public sector official. He is not here to engage in political disputes with the committee. As I said, if you wish to make an issue of any of the appointments that have been made, you should raise it in the House or directly with the minister.

Ms BOYD: I was conveying my thanks to him, Chair. Thank you for your guidance.

Mr BAILLIE: Thank you, Major General Ellwood. It is great to see you again. I would like to place on record my appreciation for your service and also your help during the disaster that we experienced in Townsville. I note that you were there regularly and not just during the initial response; yours was also a recurring face during the recovery. You touched on the appointment of regional coordinators. How important in both the response and the recovery is that local knowledge and the contacts with local organisations, local mayors and—pertinent to this committee—the interactions with not just state and local government organisations but also the volunteer organisations that appear during the response and are more prominent in that initial recovery phase?

Mr Ellwood: It is really important. I am eternally grateful for the work that each of the SRCs has done because they do just as you said; they engage with local community, and not just once. It actually has to be numerous times because, of course, community feels in different ways at different times in their recovery. Initially they are in shock. Then can come a degree of uncertainty and in some cases a degree of anger and some will become despondent. So a constant point of contact who goes and talks to communities and talks to community leaders is vitally important. Again, the community leader will often know. They will get a vibe of what is happening within the community and they can feed that to the State Recovery Coordinator and then, as you said, link with state agencies—obviously with QRA. They are a vital link with state agencies and with the federal government to make sure we are really representing the needs of community faithfully and to make sure we are highlighting things.

The great thing is if there is consistency, you might not have picked up an issue on day 1, day 7 or day 30, but it might pop up in month 2 or 3. That is also why we not only have the state recovery coordinators who are engaging but also endeavour to do our return visits through our damage assessments three to four months after an event where we doorknock literally every single damaged house both to see where the home owner is physically in terms of the recovery of their home but also to see whether they need any additional support. There has to be a continuity of care as best we can but it has to be hand in hand, obviously locally led, with local council.

Mr BAILLIE: When you are looking at these regional coordinators, having someone who has been in the community and knows all the personalities involved in not just the local government but also the state government and federal government and understands the structures and constraints of each level of government, is well known in the community and is familiar with the geographical challenges that a disaster may bring is extremely important.

Mr Ellwood: It is because they can ensure they are representing faithfully what they know to be the needs of the community. If you are someone from that area, it is not definitive. As the State Recovery Coordinator for the Southern Queensland floods, I had not lived in a number of those areas that had been impacted. If they are from the area it is advantageous because they have a point of reference before the event and then they can engage with people. They know who to talk to. They have a point of reference as we go through the recovery. It is very useful to have someone who has knowledge of the area and who knows people they can talk to. It is very useful for us.

Mr HEALY: Major General, it is great to see you not surrounded by disaster, which was the last time I saw you. It is terrific. I also want to acknowledge the vast experience that you have in a wide range of areas. I think we are very lucky to have somebody of your calibre and that of your support team. As the lead agency for disaster recovery and resilience, can you advise the committee what the agency or you consider the necessary expertise or experience to perform the functions of State Recovery Coordinator? What do you think are the key assets?

Mr Ellwood: It is individuals. Obviously you will routinely have a state recovery coordinator and a deputy recovery coordinator and we provide assistance to the state recovery coordinators who are regional liaison officers and are recovery and resilience officers. In many ways it depends on the disaster itself. As I said, where there is a significant industry impacted it might be advantageous to have someone who is very familiar with a particular industry. If it is a more remote or rural area, someone who is just very familiar with that area is advantageous. If you get both, that would be great.

I think it would be inaccurate for me to state they should be this or they should be that. As you know, former governor Paul de Jersey has also been a state recovery coordinator, providing work in the Gympie area. I took over as State Recovery Coordinator in southern Queensland, again with a different set of skills. I think, importantly, they need to be able to listen. They need to be able to then consolidate large amounts of information because we are dealing with large communities with a myriad problems and we try to synthesise what those issues are and the need for effort on recovery but also look to have the ability for potential areas where we can become more resilient. The one thing that Queensland has always done well, particularly since 2011, is we have never missed the opportunity, in the wake of a disaster, to come out of it stronger.

Mr HEALY: Are you aware of how many people are on the State Recovery Coordinator register as it stands?

Mr Ellwood: No. I will take that on notice.

Mr HEALY: No problems.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I have a question about the frequency of disasters. They seem to be coming more frequently and with greater impact in our communities. I am curious about getting your input on the locations of these disasters. Are there concerns that we are building in areas that potentially are

not suitable, so to speak? When it comes to buybacks in flood-prone regions, from what you are seeing are there suggestions about what we can do better when it comes to planning, to start removing ourselves from high-risk areas? I am after your thoughts.

Mr Ellwood: That is a very complex issue obviously, because a very large part of our state is essentially located in flood plains and in coastal areas. It is a very significant percentage. I think that will be an issue that will vex us in perpetuity.

The thing that is occurring now that we did not have previously is science, to a great degree. Things like LiDAR and those types of capabilities can really show us where the high-risk areas are. I think we should be using science to drive many of those decisions. It is quite simple to be critical of our predecessors who maybe put housing here or there, but maybe they did not have the knowledge that we have now. I think it is very important that we take the science and we accept the science as such and that we make good decisions.

Yes, we had a voluntary home buyback scheme where we removed 685 homes. That was very difficult. Some would think, 'Boy, I'm sure they're all happy.' No, they were not. Many people had lived in those homes for decades. That was their love. They had raised families there. There were many memories. It was a very difficult decision. Of course, some of those homes had flooded three, four, five or six times so it was the only decision that they could take.

I do believe that it is something that, not just this state but also federally, we need to be making sure that we are making the best decisions that we can make. It cannot be binary because, as I said, we still need homes. There is a housing shortage so it is about finding appropriate areas. Sometimes it may not be where you build but how you build where you are building. That could be part of that discussion. It is certainly going to have to be a factor as we move forward because, as you pointed out quite correctly, the disasters are becoming more frequent and more impactful. There were over 600,000 impacted Queenslanders from this last season alone.

CHAIR: General, can you explain to the committee what role you have in arranging funding and reconstruction for state assets as opposed to community and council ones? For example, if a road, a railway line or some public infrastructure is damaged, is the state covered by the same funding arrangements with the Commonwealth?

Mr Ellwood: Yes. The repair of essential public assets comes under a shared state-Commonwealth arrangement, just as with council roads, which is a great thing. We work very closely with Transport and Main Roads. They have had some very complex areas that have been damaged. We work closely with the National Emergency Management Agency and the different departments to make sure that they are aware of what is required and do the damage estimates, and then we work together.

In many ways, one of the key roles of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is to work as an interlocutor between the different departments, the range of different support mechanisms required and then the National Emergency Management Agency as consolidation. Then we continue to work with departments and councils as they move forward in their repair and recovery.

CHAIR: Is it the case that, once a disaster has been declared, damage is then on the table for discussion with the feds? It is the fact that there has been a declared disaster and there is damage. If those two are satisfied then it is all go from there?

Mr Ellwood: One point is that rail is generally not eligible under DRFA just based on their revenue generation, but for all those other assets that do not generate revenue, absolutely. We work very closely and properly. It is actually a really good system.

Ms BOYD: Major General, following on from my previous questions, can you confirm for the committee if the Premier or minister responsible consulted any names listed on or requested to view the State Recovery Coordinator register before appointments were made this disaster season?

Mr Ellwood: The discussion that I had with the Premier—and I cannot talk to anyone else—was about the functional requirement that I saw and that I considered would be important in the given disaster. That was my discussion with him about the fact that I thought a state recovery coordinator would be beneficial and I talked about the types of things that would be useful.

Ms BOYD: Did the Premier request the list?

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, the advice that public officials provide to ministers is not subject to consideration here. You can ask the responsible minister themselves, but your line of questioning I find to be tendentious and argumentative and a discourtesy to General Ellwood. I ask you to please rephrase your question or we will move on to someone else.

Ms BOYD: My sincerest apologies. In terms of broaching those questions and getting information for Queenslanders, Major General, would the most appropriate minister to ask be the Premier or the minister for disaster recovery?

Mr Ellwood: I am sorry, in regard to—

Ms BOYD: In regard to getting answers around whether the State Recovery Coordinator register was provided to the Premier or the line minister to be able to get some disclosure and transparency around these issues?

Mr Ellwood: I am sorry; I am not following what you are asking.

Ms BOYD: I am unable to have responses provided through this process in relation to whether the Premier or the disaster recovery minister had any of the names that were on the State Recovery Coordinator register provided to them prior to making appointments. Would you be able to direct me: who is the minister whom I am best to ask those questions of? Is it the Premier or is it the minister for disaster recovery?

Mr Ellwood: The appointing authority for the State Recovery Coordinator is the chair of the QDMC.

Ms BOYD: Which is the Premier, so the Premier could answer those questions if he chose to.

Mr Ellwood: I am not going to answer for the Premier.

Ms BOYD: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Pine Rivers, again, that line of questioning is inappropriate for a public sector officer. You are well aware of that. You have been a minister yourself. If you have any further questions relating to this matter, you will not raise them here with General Ellwood. You will do so directly with the responsible elected officials either in the House or in some other way. I will move on now—

Ms BOYD: I am seeking clarity, Chair, around which minister that is.

CHAIR: No. I am not having that. I have given you guidance on this. I do not want to see any more politicisation of this process with General Ellwood.

Mr BAILLIE: We are currently holding an inquiry into volunteering. We are looking at how we can attract more volunteers and have volunteering be more effective. In your role, I understand there would be quite a bit of coordination and communication with volunteer organisations and you would be privy to some of the challenges that they may face. Do you have any insights into how volunteering organisations may be able to better contribute to disaster recovery and reconstruction? Is there anything in particular that stood out to you in your interaction with those organisations that we may be able to try to influence to have them be, I guess, more effective in their service delivery?

Mr Ellwood: The volunteers that I have seen in all of the disasters have been nothing short of inspirational. I would like to say that up-front. I think it is an amazing thing to see people who give up freely their own time, some of whom have been impacted themselves, to support community. It is just absolutely amazing.

In terms of the larger volunteer organisations, I would like to state up-front that the coordination that we have now seen between the Queensland Police Service, the SES and the Queensland Fire Department has been amazing in terms of that initial relief for communities. The cleaning out of homes and just helping people fast-track the start of their recovery has been absolutely amazing.

With those volunteer organisations that sometimes will bring services or maybe will bring donations and that sort of thing, it can be quite hard for councils to bring it all together because, of course, many times councils themselves are immersed with so much of the community. The LDMG is one of those great areas and then the recovery group is a great area where they can be brought in. For me, the very best way and the way that they can be most efficient is through a community-led process with councils, because council knows what council needs. I think that is really important. Having a discussion up-front with those organisations about the sorts of support that could be required could be useful as well. Sometimes people want to help but they just do not know the best way to do it and so sometimes it can be just slightly off what was needed.

There has not been a disaster that I have seen—in fact, I can say with absolute certainty that every disaster recovery was made better and quicker and in some cases less painful because of the volunteers who were there supporting communities. It makes a huge difference.

Mr BAILLIE: We are in National Volunteer Week right now. We are all very thankful for all of our volunteers.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Could you please advise whether Peter Matic was on the State Recovery Coordination register before his appointment as Deputy State Recovery Coordinator for ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred?

Mr Ellwood: I do not believe so but I would have to get back to you on that.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you.

Mr HEALY: Major General, unfortunately we have been exposed to a lot of Mother Nature's hard work in various parts of the state. Are we getting better at doing it? If we are not, how can we? I know that is a huge question. You talk about the quality of people. Are we getting better? I know having Ergon assets allocated ahead of time and that sort of thing makes it a lot easier for recovery. Where do you think we could make more improvements?

Mr Ellwood: From my just over two years as CEO and then before that as the State Recovery Coordinator, we are getting better. We were still good when I first saw us. When I saw the Queensland Reconstruction Authority in 2022, I was blown away. I had been the coordinator for the Australian Defence Force's response to the black summer fires across three states and territories so I had seen other states and territories. When I saw what was happening in Queensland, I was amazed. From there, we are getting quicker. That is important because, of course, those who have been traumatised seek quick support so that they have a way ahead. That small thing I talked about—but not a small thing—of the improved coordination between QPS, the SES and QFD just for the clean-outs alone makes a huge difference. It is not to say we are there. We will never be there. We must always aspire to be better.

CHAIR: That concludes the hearing. Thanks to everyone who has participated today. I would like to thank our Hansard reporter for capturing our proceedings today. A transcript will be available on the committee's webpage. A number of questions were taken on notice today. We would be obliged if you could get the answers back to us by 4 June. Would that be all right, General? Thank you very much. I declare this public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 10.16 am.