



Speech by

Mr S. ROBERTSON

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Natural Disaster Costs

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Sunnybank—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.11 a.m.), by leave: As most members would be aware, Queensland is the most natural disaster prone State in Australia. Since February, we have witnessed extensive flooding throughout central, western and northern Queensland which took in approximately half of the State, plus, of course, Cyclones Steve in Cairns, Tessi in Townsville and Vaughan which, like a leadership challenge in the National Party, fizzled out—a lot of wind but very little substance.

Queensland and Commonwealth Governments have natural disaster relief arrangements in place to provide joint funding for relief measures to help communities recover from natural disasters. NDRA pays for the cost of disaster operations, restoration of public infrastructure, concessional loans to primary producers and small business and disaster relief for assistance to people suffering personal hardship.

The NDRA bill for Queensland natural disasters this financial year will top the \$100m mark, which is the highest in the ten years since the Charleville floods. Over the past 22 years the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments have allocated approximately \$1 billion of NDRA money for natural disaster relief in Queensland. NDRA expenditure so far this year on natural disasters is \$99m, which is made up of north Queensland flood and cyclone damage, \$61m; central and western Queensland floods \$35m; floods in the Condamine and Macintyre catchments in November last year \$1.9m; and south-east Queensland storms in early December last year, \$611,000. These figures do not include losses incurred by private property owners, primary producers or business from natural disasters. Preliminary estimates suggest Cyclone Tessi will cost some \$15m in NDRA payments. The projected NDRA payments for Cyclone Tessi include disaster relief assistance to individuals and families, some \$350,000; the cost of counter-disaster operations, \$1.75m; restoration of public assets in local government, \$9.5m; and the restoration of public assets in State Government, some \$3.4m.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the wonderful volunteers from the SES in Townsville, Thuringowa and, in particular, Giru for their ongoing commitment to their communities during and after these natural disasters. Their dedication to their communities never ceases to impress me.

I also pay tribute and say thank you to the employers of SES volunteers who, through their understanding and their commitment to their own communities, provide SES volunteers with time off work to help in the clean-up in their communities from these natural disasters.
