



Speech by

# Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Storm Damage

**Hon. N ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.01 am): The Department of Emergency Services is finalising its assessment of damages to public infrastructure from storms across southern and central Queensland over the last week. From this assessment, the department will be able to advise me whether the joint state and Commonwealth funded natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements can be activated. Yesterday the members for Fitzroy and Gregory joined with me for an inspection of storm damage at both Gayndah and Emerald, and I thank both of those members for their support during that visit. While the damage was indiscriminate, the response of the SES volunteers and residents was inspiring. I would like to pay tribute to the SES volunteers from these local communities and from further afield for their quick action and dedication. They regularly provide an exceptional level of support to their local communities and we cannot thank them enough.

There have been 405 calls for assistance to the SES hotline number 132500 over the 72-hour period until midnight last night. During my visit to Emerald I was able to activate the state disaster relief arrangements for 26 shires across south-east Queensland, the Wide Bay-Burnett and central Queensland regions. In total there are now 67 shires where state disaster relief arrangements have been activated following severe storms this month. Assistance is provided in two forms. Personal hardship assistance and reimbursement costs for local councils' extraordinary disaster management costs. Personal hardship assistance is available through the disaster relief assistance scheme, which is administered by the Department of Communities. This includes emergency grants of \$160 per person and up to \$740 per family for essentials such as food, dry clothes, accommodation and medical supplies. Further assistance is available for building and contents repair and replacement, and this assistance is means tested. Maximum assistance is \$9,800 for individuals and \$13,200 for couples or families.

The other form of assistance provides for the reimbursement of extraordinary disaster management costs incurred by local councils. These can include items such as meals, overtime, tarpaulins, machinery hire and private debris clean-up. This support is available under state disaster relief arrangements and is administered by the Department of Emergency Services' Emergency Management Queensland. The joint state-Commonwealth natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements when activated can also provide additional assistance for restoration of essential public assets, grant and loan assistance to sporting and community not-for-profit organisations, concessional loans for small businesses and concessional loans and freight subsidies for primary producers. I again pay tribute to the volunteers of the SES for their outstanding efforts during the recent storm events.