



Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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GIRU FLOODS

Mrs MENKENS (Burdekin—NPA) (10.19 pm): It seems incongruous to speak about heavy rain and flooding in one part of the State when another is in severe drought, but that is the normal dynamics of this great state of ours. North Queensland has been subject to some excellent drought-breaking rain from the monsoonal influence that has moved through from the north. That has been extremely welcome as, to this stage, it has not been accompanied by high winds and devastation.

Over the weekend, the small town of Giru in the Burdekin region received much publicity as it was inundated by flood waters from the Haughton River. The townspeople of Giru are used to being flooded, sometimes several times a year, and they are remarkably resilient to the effects of this. However, the absence of any disasters is in no small way due to the efforts of the SES, ambulance, police personnel and volunteers in Giru.

I particularly applaud the efforts of the two SES volunteers in Giru, Brian Parison and Frank Scarabel. Last Thursday morning when word of the heavy rain in the upper reaches came through, those two men visited every household in the flood area, alerting people to the flood threat and assisting them to remove household effects. They remained on duty from Thursday morning until Sunday afternoon when the waters had receded. Their only way to get around the town was by wading through knee- to waist-high water, which must have been very tiring. During that time, there were several medical emergencies and a medical evacuation, a family was evacuated and relocated and a small girl was successfully rescued from swirling flood waters. I would like to expand on that particular incident.

On Friday, 2 February at 12.15 pm, Brian Parison, group leader for Giru, and his brother Michael, who is a resident of Giru, rescued a young girl who was seen clinging to an electric light pole support stay wire. The girl had been playing in the water in Mill Street when she was caught in strong-flowing river water from the Haughton River. The girl was washed past the power pole where she grabbed on to the supporting stay wire. It is unknown how long she had been there when Brian and his brother Michael went to her aid. The two men started toward the girl in waist-high, fast-flowing water. When they both stepped into neck-high, fast-flowing water, they had to quickly retreat and try another approach. The little girl was in immediate danger of being swept away. Both men positioned themselves further down stream in the strong current where they were able to brace themselves in waist-deep water. They told the girl to let go and try to swim in their direction. The girl was washed towards them and they were able to grab her and take her to safe ground. The girl was badly shaken but safe. I particularly acknowledge and congratulate those wonderful volunteers for this courageous act and for their other efforts. I have alerted the minister to their actions, and I have no doubt that he shares my feelings.

The only downside to the current rain in north Queensland has been the flooding of the Bruce Highway. This rain has again highlighted the urgent need for some decent upgrading of the Bruce Highway. Intermittently all weekend road and rail communication has been cut in several places between Townsville, Bowen and Mackay. Food supplies such as milk were running low in the Burdekin towns and similar incidents are occurring in Ingham, Innisfail and Cairns. For how many more years is this government going to ignore the basic infrastructure needs of north Queensland communities?