



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard Tuesday, 10 February 2009

MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE: NORTH QUEENSLAND FLOODS AND VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.25 am): It is simply not possible to describe in words the grief of a nation in response to the terrible tragedy unfolding in Victoria—173 lives lost, too many people with severe injuries and the expectation of more loss to come. Today we also mourn the loss of seven Queenslanders confirmed as dead following flooding over the past three months.

When Queenslanders went to bed on Saturday night our hearts and thoughts were with the people of north Queensland who were battling severe flooding. Homes were inundated and whole towns were turned into waterways. We were conscious of the heatwave and the bushfire threat in Victoria but nothing could have prepared us for the devastating news we woke to on Sunday morning.

This is the most devastating and horrific bushfire ever experienced in Australia. At times like this, the numbers of deaths can be overwhelming. Whether it is the horrific losses in Victoria or the seven confirmed flood related deaths in Queensland, the impact on their families and friends is equally traumatic and difficult to comprehend.

Australia is a land of natural beauty but we also face our fair share of natural disasters. On Sunday I visited Ingham with the federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan. As we spoke to local residents about the difficulties they were encountering their thoughts and concerns were focused on the people of Victoria; a great example of the enduring Aussie spirit of mateship and concern for others.

Our emergency service workers both full-time and volunteer regularly put their lives on the line to defend life and property. Today our primary thoughts are with the families of the victims of the bushfires and floods but we also extend our thoughts, care and concern to those emergency service workers who fought so valiantly to protect their local communities. In Queensland, I particularly pay tribute to our Queensland Fire and Rescue Service swift water rescue teams who over the past few months have performed dozens of dangerous rescues in raging floodwaters. We also recognise the valiant efforts and the emotional impact these events have on members of the police, fire and ambulance services, SES and rural fire volunteers who together deal with the trauma of the loss of life on a far too regular basis.

On behalf of the people of Queensland and all emergency service workers, we extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and the brave emergency service workers who risked their lives to protect them and their communities.