



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Hansard Wednesday, 11 February 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

North Queensland Floods

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.06 am): Wild weather has battered our state in the first few weeks of 2009, inundating the homes and lives of thousands of Queenslanders. An active monsoon together with tropical cyclones Charlotte and Ellie have brought heavy rains to the north and north-west in particular. Towns like Normanton and Karumba in the Carpentaria shire were isolated by floodwaters in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Charlotte, which crossed the coast on 11 January. These towns remain isolated today, almost a month later, and can expect to be for a further six weeks.

On the east coast at Ingham, floodwaters encroached on around 2,900 homes and businesses in the aftermath of Cyclone Ellie, which crossed the coast on 2 February. Where much of the media attention has been on the areas of Ingham, Normanton and Karumba, we also need to acknowledge the difficulties experienced by many other flooded communities across Queensland which have been isolated and inundated by floodwaters for many weeks. I refer in particular to areas in the gulf country, in far-western Queensland and along the far-north Queensland coastline. In total, 36 local government areas have been declared eligible for joint state and federally funded natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements.

Queenslanders can be proud of the response of our emergency service workers and agencies. The commitment, professionalism and dedication of our State Emergency Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Emergency Management Queensland, rural fire service volunteers and Queensland Ambulance Service officers has shined through again. These organisations, working in partnership with local disaster management groups and councils, have helped communities prepare for flooding, and manage inundation and isolation. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of organisations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army, which do a fantastic job in supporting communities in need, and the many other volunteer organisations which have worked tirelessly to help those affected by the recent floods.

The heavy rain in north Queensland has eased in recent days, and floodwaters have started to recede. However, the same monsoon that impacted on the north has now moved to central Queensland. Overnight, Gladstone and the Emerald area received heavy falls, and Longreach is on flood alert after heavy falls in the Thomson River catchment. In Gladstone, localised flooding saw water enter the yards of a small number of properties. In Emerald, water is over the road to Clermont. However, I am advised this will clear very quickly. Emergency Management Queensland will continue to work with local disaster management groups and councils to help manage flood response and recovery efforts in the coming weeks.