



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Hansard Thursday, 21 May 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

South-East Queensland Floods

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.36 am): The weather experienced across the south-east of the state in the past 36 hours has been severe and extraordinary. Rain gauges across the region have been filled to overflowing, with around one-third of Brisbane's annual rainfall received since the weather event started a short time ago.

The Bremer River at Ipswich is expected to peak this morning at around 11.2 metres, while the Bureau of Meteorology and local authorities are keeping a watching brief on other streams and rivers in the area, particularly Slacks Creek and Mooloolah Creek. Hundreds of roads across the region were last night closed because of floodwaters, but thankfully many of those have been re-opened.

The bureau is maintaining a watching brief on weather patterns over the region, with the possibility of more rain in coming days. There is the potential for more rain across the region in the next 24 hours. However, it is not expected to be as torrential as rain experienced in the past 36 hours.

In the last 36 hours the State Emergency Service's hotline, 132500, has received close to 3,000 calls from residents affected by this extraordinary weather event. From these calls, some 1,725 tasks have been allocated to SES crews in the field. I am happy to report that as of this morning around 700 of the more urgent jobs have been completed. This is an impressive achievement by our volunteers in the field, and I would like to place on the public record our thanks for their sterling efforts.

Of course the commitment and dedication of our volunteers continues to shine. Thanks to the break in the weather, many of the 400 volunteers who donned the orange overalls yesterday and last night have been stood down to rest, but more are out in the field today attending to the needs of the community. The volunteers and crews from local councils and, indeed, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service swift-water rescue crews are back on the ground this morning working to complete tasks already received. However, a large number are still being reported to councils and to the SES.

While I am on my feet, I would also like to talk about the high number of swift-water rescues that have occurred throughout the south-east region over the last 36 hours by the highly skilled swift-water rescue teams of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. In total, more than 100 people have been rescued from vehicles and floodwaters in more than 20 separate incidents.

Perhaps most disturbing for us all is that the latest rescue took place this morning at around seven o'clock, despite the repeated warnings throughout yesterday and overnight. Again, I can only plead with the community to please take care in floodwaters. It is very difficult to determine the depth of the water that a car might drive through or indeed the speed the water is moving at, and too many people are getting into too much trouble and putting lives at risk. Since November last year, which was the beginning of the storm season, unfortunately and tragically we have lost nine people in Queensland in flooded drains, creeks and rivers. We do not want to see that number increased further.

Everyone in the community needs to heed the warnings about floodwaters. They are unpredictable and dangerous. In particular, I reiterate the Deputy Premier's plea for parents and others who see children unsupervised near floodwaters to get them away from the floodwaters. I ask parents to please take care because this is an exceptionally dangerous period of time.