




Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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JAPAN EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.39 am): I rise to speak to the condolence motion and to express deep sorrow for the people of Japan. We certainly have seen a summer where the devastation has gone from Australia around the Asia-Pacific to New Zealand and now, in unprecedented magnitude, to Japan. The Japanese people are suffering on a scale not seen since the Second World War. The massive earthquake and tsunami that hit Honshu on the Japanese archipelago has totally wiped out entire communities. As of yesterday, 8,100 people have died; at least 12,000 people are unaccounted for; 452,000 people are living in shelters; and 375,000 people are still without electricity.

Queenslanders have been hit by floods and cyclones and we can appreciate the feelings of total loss and desperation that tens of thousands of Japanese are now feeling. As the Premier said, they have suffered on an unprecedented scale. I do not for a moment pretend to understand how desperate the situation is and how bad the suffering is. Food, water and fuel for heating are in short supply. Thousands of people have been forced to flee from the radioactive fallout from the crippled Fukushima nuclear reactor. Volunteer technicians, virtually on a potential suicide mission, have stayed behind in a desperate attempt to stem the radiation leaks from the overheating fuel rods. These are brave people and we wish them every success.

I have been fortunate to have visited Japan on several occasions. I say without hesitation that everywhere that I went whilst there I was shown exceptional kindness and hospitality. I think that many in this parliament who have visited Japan would not fail to have been impressed by the country, by its people, by a society that embraces new technology, innovations and efficiencies in manufacturing whilst also retaining traditional values of honesty, politeness and respect for others and particularly respect for family. That is one reason why I encourage the Premier to form the Queensland parliamentary friendship group with Japan that I know she has the intention to. At the politicians' level it is something that would be highly valued, especially by our friends in Japan.

As we come to terms with the extent of the devastation in Japan we have heard reports of incredible survival—or miracles—as survivors were found against seemingly overwhelming odds. Just yesterday we saw poignant pictures of two people rescued, a grandmother and her grandson, after nine days. We also saw pictures over the past few days of the rescue of an elderly man who took refuge on his roof and members of a search and rescue team bringing to safety a baby buried under wood and mud.

The impact can be gauged by the fact that the Emperor spoke to the citizens of Japan through YouTube. Emperor Akihito expressed his concerns for the difficulties of those searching for survivors due to the cold weather and that of evacuees and victims facing food, water and energy shortages. Emperor Akihito reaffirmed Prime Minister Kan's words that the events have been the worst crisis since the Second World War.

Queensland enjoys long and very strong trading and cultural ties with Japan. The first Consul-General of Japan to this country was located in Townsville in 1896. Japan has been Queensland's largest trading partner, as the Premier has mentioned, for over 50 years. There are 22 sister relationships between Queensland and Japan. Queensland has been a long-favoured destination for Japanese holiday-

makers and many Japanese have chosen to make Queensland their home, including on the Gold Coast where we recently had an Essence of Japan cultural day. Those people are an important part of the Gold Coast and Queensland society. Many Japanese individuals and companies have invested in Queensland. In short, we in Queensland have very strong ties with Japan. I share the sentiments of the Premier that Mr Makoto Hinei, the Consul-General, who has only just left, will find it very difficult as he returns home to the current situation that his country is facing, even though I know he is from a different part of Japan.

The recent natural disasters in Queensland are seriously affecting consumer confidence and I have heard the recent stories of cancelled flights and a lack of confidence in our tourism market. That, of course, pales into insignificance compared to the images of the devastation in Japan. It is hard to imagine where the recovery will start. But I do know this: the Japanese people are stoic, they are resilient and industrious and they will rebuild. To the people of Japan and to all those in Queensland with relatives and friends in Japan and in those areas so badly affected, on behalf of opposition members I offer our deep, heartfelt condolences and very best wishes for recovery.