



Speech by

Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Hansard Wednesday, 16 February 2011

MOTION: NATURAL DISASTERS

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (5.40 pm): I rise to support the condolence motion moved by the Premier and in doing so I extend my deepest sympathy and thoughts to the people who have been touched by the recent and heartbreaking rain, flood and cyclone tragedies.

Some people have lost everything. Some people have lost loved ones. Some people feel as though they have even lost hope. Everyone joins those people in saying we are here to help you through these troubling times. We are here to say we will not forget you. As we have heard from other honourable members, the recent rain, flood and cyclone events are the worst natural disasters in a generation and they have affected a lot of people in a lot of communities. Like all Queenslanders, I have been overwhelmed by the enormity of these events. I find it hard to understand how they happened and how people were affected by them. Watching the events unfold around me on the television earlier this year I felt a sense of helplessness, I felt a sense of powerlessness. My heart goes out to all honourable members and the people they represent who have been affected by these disaster events.

Sadly the people of the Morayfield electorate were not spared from the recent rain and flooding events. Local people will forever remember 11 January 2011 as the day that heartbreak struck our community. I understand that hydrologists monitoring the Caboolture River, Burpengary Creek and Sheep Station Creek catchments were concerned that water levels in these watercourses were rising too quickly and posed a threat to people in low-lying areas. Evacuations and some water rescues were required. Emergency Service workers showed great innovation and courage as they went about their work of saving lives.

A lot of people do not realise how serious the situation could have been in the Morayfield state electorate. At Narangba in the neighbourhood that I live in and just around the corner from my house we had torrents of water flowing down suburban streets. We had rapids. We had water currents so strong that people would have been swept away if they were not careful. We had Emergency Service workers using boats on suburban streets to rescue people from their homes. We had police in canoes. We had cars stranded on the Bruce Highway as a result of the rising floodwaters. We had many people dealing with the horror of having dirty, muddy and putrid floodwaters through their homes.

This horror was also experienced by people in the Burpengary, Morayfield, Caboolture, Moorina and Rocksberg areas. People in every part of the Morayfield state electorate were affected in some way by this natural disaster. But through this tragedy one of humanity's most inspiring qualities shone through: courage. I admire courage. It inspires, it motivates, it reassures; yet it is also so human. It is so human in how it can touch individuals, how it allows individuals to reach out to others. There was much courage on display on 11 January 2011 in the Morayfield electorate. I saw it; I felt it. The strength of the human spirit, the strength of the Queensland spirit, was felt in every corner of the Morayfield state electorate on that day and in the days and weeks following that tragic day. We see it in our neighbourhoods where neighbours continue to help neighbours recover from this event; we see it in our streets where complete strangers continue to help complete strangers recover from this event; we see it in our communities where people continue to open their hearts, their wallets and their homes to people in need; we see it right across our

great state where Queenslanders continue to provide a helping hand to those who need it; we see it around our nation, where Australians continue to say, 'We are here. We are here to help'.

Interestingly, I heard from my cousins who live in the Indooroopilly area about a recent chance meeting with a young Texan man. This man said he was amazed by the overwhelming community response to the flooding event in South-East Queensland. The young man said that back home in Texas one of three things would happen following a natural disaster: either people would be waiting in their homes for the government to come and help, people would be looting or people would be working out who to sue. The young Texan said that what he was witnessing in Queensland could only be described as humanity heaven. Humanity heaven indeed. Something special happened in our communities and our state in the wake of those heartbreaking tragedies. We proved to each other who we are. We are Queenslanders. We are the ones who look after our mates. We are the ones who pick each other up when we get knocked down. Nonetheless, people have still lost their lives, things have been lost, houses have been lost. These things are people's things, these houses are people's homes. We must continually remind ourselves that these people must not be forgotten. It was and continues to be important to me to remind those people in the Morayfield state electorate affected by the recent flooding event that as a community we will not forget them, as a government we will not forget them and as their state member I will not forget them. I will do my best to help them. I will do my best to be with them through these troubling times.

In the days and weeks following that tragic day I went door to door visiting people affected by flooding. I sat with them and I cried with them. I cleaned out flood affected sheds and even got attacked by a water rat. I cleaned out blocked gutters. I attended street meetings and community barbecues. However, I was most moved by a visit to a street in Morayfield. The people who live in this street are poor. I have never seen people so poor. They are poor. But what they lacked in financial capacity they made up for in courage, resilience and inspiration. I cannot imagine how I would respond to seeing everything I own being discarded on my footpath. But the people of this street, these courageous people, told me that they would be alright. 'It's the other people' or 'It's my neighbour you need to worry about', they would say. My faith in the strength of the human spirit was renewed that day in that street.

I would like to thank Councillor Chris Whiting, Councillor Adrian Raedel and Senator Mark Furner for taking time to join me in doorknocking affected people in the Morayfield state electorate. Thank you also to sports minister Phil Reeves for visiting affected sporting clubs with me and to community services minister Karen Struthers for calling me and checking on the people of the Morayfield state electorate. I would also like to put on the record my appreciation to Telstra, in particular Kris Carver from Telstra Country Wide, all Telstra workers in the Morayfield state electorate and the members of the Community and Public Sector Union for helping to get affected people reconnected to the telecommunications network so that they could call their friends and family to tell them that they were alright.

I also thank the members of the miscellaneous workers union who contacted me offering support and assistance. Whenever and wherever help is needed, the Missos are never too far away.

It is also important to note the valuable, tireless and selfless work of local groups and local people throughout the Caboolture region. I say thank you to the Morayfield and District Lions Club, the Apex Club of Caboolture, the Forest Ridge North Neighbourhood Watch group and all Neighbourhood Watch groups in the Morayfield state electorate, the Rotary Clubs of North Lakes and Caboolture, the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Caboolture River Road, the Queensland Police Service and other emergency services workers, the local newspapers and radio stations and all the local people who helped other local people in one way or another. Thank you. I would like to specifically note the outstanding work of the community recovery team from the Department of Communities. This team was of unbelievable support to affected people throughout the Caboolture region. Everywhere I go I hear people praise this team. They say well done and thank you.

Finally, I say thank you to our Premier, Anna Bligh. Thank you for your strong, compassionate and dedicated leadership. Your commitment to us, your commitment to Queensland, is truly inspirational. Our community's response to these heartbreaking tragedies has emphasised that great Queensland spirit of getting involved, helping your mates and working hard for those in most need. Despite our sadness for what has been lost, we should use this opportunity to build on that spirit. Let us challenge each other to be more involved in our communities. Let us get to know our neighbours just a little better. Let us spend more time with those we love. Let us always remember that we live in a great place with great people. Let us never forget that we are Queenslanders.