




Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 16 February 2011

MOTION: NATURAL DISASTERS

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (6.05 pm): Throughout our state's history our character has been forged by what can be devastating natural forces. The events of this summer of sorrow have further formed Queensland and Queenslanders. Thirty-six lives lost in the wake of these terrible natural forces are an indelible reminder to us all of the frailty of humans. But our humanity means that those 36 lives are not lost to their families, to their friends, to their communities—those 36 lives will continue to touch many, indeed, as evidenced by the poignant contributions by honourable members in heartfelt support of this condolence motion. On behalf of the people of the Stafford electorate, I express our deepest condolences to those who have lost friends or family in the floods and the many others who lost property or suffered hardship as a result of the rising waters and of Tropical Cyclone Yasi.

It has been a terrible time for Queensland and few, even if only through the emotional impact of the tragedy, have gone unaffected. While those directly impacted have struggled with the elements, loss and grief, those around them have rallied to help. This debate has highlighted the breadth of ways in which the true character of Queenslanders has shone through—be it the resilience of those whose homes and businesses have been inundated, be it the courage of our emergency services and utilities workers, or the demonstrations of mateship through the volunteering effort or generous support for appeals for assistance.

In the Stafford electorate our community was spared any direct impact of the great flood of 2011, but our community was there in the response. When my honourable friend the member for Everton joined me at the Newmarket State Emergency Services depot and at the Brisbane City Council's Stafford depot, both in my electorate, our efforts to fill sandbags saw us as part of teams of many hundreds of volunteers from an array of backgrounds.

For many northsiders, the only way they could contribute was via the fundraising efforts, which began when the floodwaters peaked in Rockhampton and they continue today. I could not mention every effort in this regard, but I will note the efforts of some of those Queenslanders whose character is truly still being moulded. Local schools directly unaffected, such as St Anthony's in Kedron and St Columba's in Wilston, have adopted sister parish schools in Ipswich and Rosewood respectively. Students as young as six have written messages of support to pupils they have never met. Last Friday alone, one school raised more than \$1,100 for much needed books, uniforms and sporting equipment.

But the contributions do not have to be on that scale. They do not have to be on the scale of the significant contributions from our friends overseas and across Australia that we have heard of during this debate. At Somerset Hills State School at Stafford Heights, one year 3 student and one year 4 student took it upon themselves, and with the assistance of one of their parents, to doorknock their street, and they raised \$53.40, which was promptly sent to the Premier's Flood Relief Appeal.

In addition, students at Wilston State School have filled 80 shoeboxes with small gifts and toys and individually addressed them to the 80 students of the Alpha State School. It is just to let them know people

are thinking of them. They went so far as to add extra presents for the young siblings of those students to ensure that no-one was left out.

After having extended the sincere condolences on behalf of my constituents, I would now like to in turn thank northsiders and Queenslanders in general for their generous and ongoing goodwill. The events of this summer of sorrow have formed Queensland and Queenslanders.