




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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MOTION: NATURAL DISASTER EVENTS OF 2013

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (8.02 pm): I rise to contribute to the condolence motion moved by the Premier earlier today, and my condolences and the condolences of the people of the Coomera electorate go to the six people who lost their lives. From young Angus, aged three, through to young men 25 years of age, through to an elderly gentleman who has been there and seen it all who passed away at 81 years of age, tragically their lives were cut short by this terrible event that occurred. I recall reading recently about young Angus. His dad spoke about his life and how he enjoyed his life. It really was a fitting tribute to a little boy who had so much to offer the future, but sadly that will not occur. So the very young, the young men and the seniors were all affected by this tragedy.

Of course, Australia's history of flood and fire has been well documented over the centuries that Australia has been occupied. Dorothea Mackellar and others have often written of the floods, the fires, the sunburnt country and so forth. But those who have lost their loved ones, the ones who are left behind, are the ones who will go on and suffer. Those who have lost their lives, yes, sadly they are gone but their pain has also gone. Those who have lost their loved ones will continue to think about them. Hopefully they will think about the good times. Hopefully they will have a laugh and have a bit of a joke about the funny times and forget about some of those painful times.

We have to think about those who suffered in the 2011 flood who have also been affected in 2013—their mental anguish, the way in which this event has yet again hit them. Some of them must wonder when it will end. Some of those have been affected multiple times. Some of them have been affected three or four or even more times over the years. Some of them were affected back in 1974 and they relived those days two years ago and again in recent times.

But we also acknowledge those who risk themselves to help others. It is very important for us here tonight to acknowledge them. I know that throughout today many members have spoken of the bravery of individuals. We acknowledge those who choose a career that often puts them in harm's way. It is their role in society. It is what they do every day. We are talking of course about emergency services workers in the police, in the ambulance and in fire and rescue.

As well, there are the volunteers, the volunteers who make a difference to someone else's life. I know that probably every member in this place is one of those volunteers in some way, shape or form, not necessarily in the recent past but over time they have been volunteers. That is part of our make-up as members of parliament. We just know that we have to get out there. But I am talking about those volunteers we see in the community—the likes of the SES and others. A poem that I have often recited comes to mind. Indeed, I recited this poem in my maiden speech all those years ago in 2009. The poem is *To Have Succeeded* by Ralph Waldo Emerson. It starts—

To laugh often and love much;
To win respect of intelligent people ...

And it goes on. Then what bubbles to the top is what we are talking about here tonight, and that is—

To find the best in others;

To give one's self;
To leave the world a bit better;

And that is what we are talking about and this poem says it so beautifully. It goes on—

Whether by a healthy child,
A garden patch,

Then it comes to the crux—

To know even one life has breathed easier
Because you have lived ...
This is to have succeeded.

That poem is about all of those people who go out there as volunteers to do the crazy things that some of the members here today have spoken about—some of the dangerous things that they have done to rescue someone else and to know that because they lived someone else survived. They saved someone. Whether it be an individual who went out into a raging flood or whether it be a group of people who managed to winch someone to safety, they caused others to breathe easier.

Many have spoken here today of the resilience of Queenslanders. Many have talked about us being a different breed. We have talked about those of us north of the border—we heard it so many times in 2011 and in 2013 we have heard those words. I have to say that from time to time it puts us offside with a few other people around the country because they think to themselves, 'Hang on a second. We'd probably do the same thing.' So I would like to put it to members here tonight that the reality is that it is the resilience of human kind, that it is about human kind wherever we are.

Recently I travelled to Chile. I recalled the work and the effort that was brought to Chile from right around the world to save those miners, to do some amazing things to bring them out of that mine. There were probably a couple of Queenslanders amongst them, but the reality is that it is humankind that is determined to help others and determined to band together at times such as this to make life easier for others and to help them through those tough times.

A moment ago I mentioned the efforts of the SES. We really have to take our hat off to these people. They train regularly. Some of them are out there training on a weekly or a monthly basis. They wear those heavy overalls, and we all know what they look like. They put in so much effort. They wear those heavy overalls whether it is stinking hot or freezing cold. They are out there in the marketplace doing the things that need to be done, whether it is looking for a deceased person who may have been lost in a flood or something else.

We also have to remember that the Rotary clubs, the Lions clubs and all of the other service clubs in the community also band together. These are world-wide organisations. They are part of humankind and they are determined to help others in their down-and-out times. Then there are the churches throughout Queensland, Australia and the world that often provide support, and the Salvation Army comes to mind. So many times they are the unsung hero. They are the ones who are on site handing out the tea and the coffee. I do not mean to put them above other organisations. Of course, the Red Cross is out there doing its bit as well. All of these church and other organisations are out there helping to make things right, to bring things back to the norm as best they can for people. Of course, as we have all had tragedies in our life, we know that those people who have been affected will feel the pain sometimes for years to come. They will never forget what has happened to them this time and, as I have said, some have experienced it time and time again and yet they keep bouncing back.

By all accounts the Coomera electorate did pretty well, and I thank God for that. The worst affected were the people in parts of the cane lands, in particular, Jacobs Well. Even in Jacobs Well—and we received a number of calls about the fact they did not have power for a number of hours—there were some amazing stories. I would like to share one story about a shop owner in Jacobs Well. She contacted the local councillor who then contacted me. I went back to her to chat about some issues. She was terribly worried because she had no power. She had quite a large shop and she could not just put generators on the fridges or freezers; it meant hard-wiring them in. Bringing in the type of generator required would have cost more than the loss. Basically, she had to sit there and watch it all go off and eventually destroy it. Of course, she did the right thing and made sure she minimised the damage. Fortunately, she was insured and she was going to take care of things in that regard.

She also pointed out to me that she had a property in Laidley which she knew had gone underwater. I encouraged her to contact her insurance broker. She did not think he would be there because it was a weekend. I suggested that he would be there given what had just happened in Queensland and of course he was. He assured her that her property in Laidley was well and truly taken care of insurance-wise. She knew at the end of that second day that things were going to be okay financially for them.

Of course, there is also the emotional hit. So she put everything to bed in Jacobs Well—and this is where the story starts to get interesting—as far as the shop was concerned. It could not be opened because they had no power for 2½ days so she headed off to Laidley, which I did not know at the time.

Late on the third day I discovered that the power was about to come back on. I made a few calls to people who had contacted me with their worries about the power. Most of them were fairly minor issues. A few people lost their frozen meats and so forth. So I rang this lady and she was the last person I needed to ring. She was at her home in Laidley cleaning up and so forth. I said that there was some good news which was that the power was back on in Jacobs Well. She was so pleased to hear that for the other people in Jacobs Well. She said, 'I have to tell you this. What we went through in Jacobs Well is just so tiny, such a minimal thing, compared to what the people in Laidley'—and she was not talking about her own property in Laidley—'have gone through over the last few days. It is nothing. That issue that I thought was a big mountain in front of me in Jacobs Well is nothing compared to the devastation that these people are going through. I am so pleased that I have come here and I can help with the clean up in the Laidley area.'

There are other stories such as the people in Eagleby who were unable to get to their home. They were not inundated. So, yes, it was inconvenient but they were able to find other accommodation and everything was okay. It was the same situation with Helensvale. Strangely enough, I met Pastor Greg for the first time in probably five years. I happened to meet a bloke in one of the local pubs in Alberton. I had not been in this pub for about five years and lo and behold I am sitting there and in walks Pastor Greg behind me. I said hello and asked how everything was going. I asked if he had heard any sad stories or about any issues. He mentioned that a lady had been in touch—

Mr Rickuss: Gem Hotel?

Mr CRANDON: Yes, that was the Gem Hotel. I take that interjection. Pastor Greg said that a lady might be in touch with me the next day because she had lost all of her frozen food and she would not have any money as she would not be receiving her pension for a couple of days. Of course, the next day she got in touch with us. You would not read about it, but she is one of the local Quota members, one of the local people who do so much for the rest of the community. It was so heartening to be able to help her, to get her back on her feet and provide her with the wherewithal and the capacity to replace those frozen foods that she lost from her freezer.

Some individuals in the local area suffered stresses of various kinds, particularly financial stress. I mentioned the shopkeeper and others. Those people in our area will survive. No-one lost massive amounts and certainly there was plenty of insurance in place to take care of things like the issues faced by the shopkeeper. However, we have to help others around Queensland, some of whom have lost everything and have no insurance and no capacity to buy insurance for their properties; we have to rebuild for them. We have to make it right for them and make sure that we do things better for Queenslanders in the future. I commend the motion to the House.