




Speech by
Samuel Cox

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard Tuesday, 12 February 2013

MOTION: NATURAL DISASTER EVENTS OF 2013

 **Mr COX** (Thuringowa—LNP) (10.12 pm): I rise to speak in support of the condolence motion moved by the Premier. I firstly express my deepest condolences to all those who lost loved ones in the recent floods and events across this state. The loss of life in times like this is unforeseen and comes as a great tragedy to those families. It comes as a reminder to us all of the dangers and perils of floodwaters and that 'if it is flooded, forget it'. The families who have lost loved ones will need the support of their community for a long time to come. While we cannot bring back the lives lost, we can help to rebuild the lives and homes of others affected.

The loss of property and homes we have seen too many times in recent years. I am always amazed how communities pick themselves up and come together with the support of many others and soldier on. We see children who may have lost everything heading back to damaged schools with the fantastic help of their teachers and parents. Why? Because it is time to go back to school. It is the start of a new school year and it is all part of getting life back to normal as quickly as possible. It is far from a case of 'life goes on', but I believe more in the inbuilt instinct within us to get back up again.

It has become all too much for some, though, as they have been affected year after year by flooding. Some are struggling to hold it together and find that drive to carry on. The member for Gympie reminded us today that his town has had four floods in two years.

The damage to businesses and rural areas in some districts has been enormous. It is important we help these people get their lives back to normal as soon as possible as they are the ones who create the revenue and jobs that people need to assist them to recover after such events. Towns and little communities generally only survive on what industry and businesses provide in the way of structure and employment. It is essential that, while this year we set about rebuilding people's homes, we support local business where we can to get them started again.

As residents throughout Central Queensland and Southern Queensland were inundated by floodwaters recently, I had flashbacks to Cyclone Yasi and knew that there would be a lot of Queenslanders needing help. I spoke with the local Vinnies manager in Townsville who explained that it is best to wait and make sure we deliver the support and goods that are actually needed on the ground in the affected areas before we rush into collecting goods from the public. The best way to help those affected is by donating cash to appeals such as the Red Cross appeal. This can then in part be used to help local businesses get going again by purchasing goods from them.

Last week I got a phone call from a local resident in Townsville. Julianna Adcock has family in Bundaberg. She was keen to lend a hand somehow. Her idea was to send practical assistance in the form of linen, baby clothes and toiletries, which she had been told by her connections with a local church in the Burnett would be needed in the coming weeks. She had the idea of setting up a Facebook page for her appeal which she called 'From Townsville to Bundaberg with love'. She was asking for help in setting up the collection of goods. She had already lined up Lindsay Transport and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. I managed to get on to Amcor packaging in Townsville to get boxes to put the goods in. Local businessman Brad Webb, who runs another charity called Food Relief, supplied the pallets. The Townsville

City Council graciously came on board and supplied storage in the V8 track's pit lane. 1300SMILES donated boxes of toothbrushes. I went online and endorsed her appeal and made an effort to go to the local media, who have been fantastic in trying to get this promotion out there.

Julianna was very clear about what sort of items she wanted to send down to Bundaberg. She knew that as the families camped out in the Bundaberg showgrounds or in the ruins of their homes they would need simple things like bedding and toiletries. She also explained about the importance of sending items in new or near-new condition. Julianna said, 'These people have lost many things and we will not permit anything to be sent to them that is stained or damaged in any way.' Last Saturday was the first day for collection. There was a fantastic response from the community.

Sadly I cannot take part in Thursday night's kissing booth at the Kirwan Tavern organised by local radio personalities CK and Blake. They will be donating the proceeds to Julianna's Bundaberg appeal and had invited me to take part in a special round called 'Pash a Pollie'. Believe me, I am keen to help flood victims in Bundaberg and surrounding regions, but something tells me that this would not have been a money-spinner if they had got me involved.

Julianna's appeal, 'From Townsville to Bundaberg with love', will continue to collect donations for the remaining Saturdays in February and she is keen to get the first pallets going. It is gratifying to see the capacity for generosity Queenslanders have for one another.

On a related note, I recently represented the Minister for Police and Community Safety in handing out Australia Day Awards to local fire, ambulance and emergency workers. The awards ceremony was a great opportunity to recognise the outstanding contributions made to community safety by operational staff and volunteers in 2012.

Here are some facts on how the brave men and women from the emergency services were involved in rendering assistance in the 2013 floods and disasters. It must be remembered a lot of these are volunteers. The following is a breakdown of requests to the SES: 1,283 for roof damage; 999 for leaking roofs; 1,026 for trees down; 1,082 for sandbagging. Over 380 SES volunteers from across the state were deployed to assist in the Rockhampton, Bundaberg, North Burnett, Maryborough, Gayndah and Scenic Rim areas. Some 20 SES volunteers came from Tasmania and were deployed to the Scenic Rim area to assist in the clean-up for two days in late January. The EMQ rescue helicopters from Brisbane and Townsville conducted a total of 65 winch rescues resulting in 135 people being winched to safety from rooftops, isolated areas and flooded streets. The Australian Defence Force deployed a total of 248 personnel, 156 of these to Bundaberg alone. In Townsville, the city I come from, the Black Hawks of 5th Aviation Regiment were also deployed.

More than 3,500 fire service workers including rural fire brigade volunteers and fire support staff were involved. I think a great way to show the continued support to affected families, businesses, volunteers and emergency workers in the towns and local communities is for us all to go along and help celebrate Australia Day II on 23 February. I commend the Premier's motion to the House.