




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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MOTION: NATURAL DISASTER EVENTS OF 2013

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (7.37 pm): Almost two years ago we sat in this place shocked after a summer of destruction and tragedy as Queensland faced the monumental task of rebuilding a state devastated by cyclones and floods. It is with sadness that we stand again offering comfort to families torn by the loss of loved ones and those who have lost their homes, businesses and livelihoods. Our condolence goes to all their families. Communities that were smashed in the path of Cyclone Yasi in Far North Queensland, that had not even rebuilt infrastructure, watched again as fires raged across hundreds of thousands of kilometres. Likewise, communities in Central and Southern Queensland, who are still recovering after floods rampaged through their towns destroying homes and robbing families of their loved ones, watched again in horror as rivers rose and floodwaters again stole their life and possessions.

As a nation Australians, and I believe particularly Queenslanders, are never too tired to lend a hand, never too busy to reach out to those in need. Resilience is in our national character and strength in adversity is our state's creed. As communities turn to the task of recovering and families turn to the task of rebuilding their battered lives, we as their representatives must ensure that the rebuilding task is not dominated by lack but guided by need.

Our shared experience of fires, floods and all forms of hardship have produced the best in us and the trials that have faced Queensland over the past few years should become the motivation for us to forge a new path for the future. It is unacceptable that the north should find itself isolated, that supermarket shelves in Atherton and Cairns are emptied of necessary supplies and that industries across one-third of the state should grind to a halt every time the major highway connecting the north and south is cut off by floodwaters. It is vitally important that an inland highway is developed to become the second freight artery to the north, to minimise the economic impact of our extreme weather, to provide a reliable alternative route and to reduce the traffic burden on the Bruce Highway.

I recall that, when Yasi hit, the Bruce Highway was cut and remained cut for almost two weeks. In the north, some supermarkets had a lot of trouble getting in supplies as the roads were cut off. That is an example that we need to look to when issues such as this arise. The area that Yasi impacted stretched from Townsville to Cairns and my electorate is the inland part of that area. Many parts of my electorate were hit with category 3 and sometimes category 4 forces. When the communities were cut off, they realised that there was an inland highway west of Townsville, going up the Hervey Range to the Lynd Highway, where the roads connect and head up to Mount Garnet. Once they realised that, there was a convoy of vehicles and supply got through.

We have to look at what has happened here. We are going to see catastrophe after catastrophe, because in the north I have seen many cyclones buzz past us on different occasions. Therefore, it is important to have that vital link so that, if the Bruce Highway is cut off, we have an alternative inland route. That will breathe life into rural communities, it will provide an inland route and also it will relieve traffic congestion on the Bruce Highway. On the road from Townsville to Mount Garnet, all that is needed is to upgrade the crossings at Stockyard Creek, Snake Creek, Fletcher Creek, Sandy Creek, Basalt River and Clarke River. I see that \$150 million has been allocated over five years to upgrade that road from a single

lane to a double lane, but I believe that it is possible to build an inland highway right through to Melbourne, providing that alternative access.

We appreciate all the efforts of the SES, the fireies, the police and also the government. I believe that they did an admirable job and need to be commended, as did previous governments when we were hit with the floods and Yasi. Indeed, Peter Beattie did a great job when Cyclone Larry hit Innisfail. It is most important that we look after our Public Service and ensure that we have public servants who are on call, available, ready and alert, able to be there as quickly and safely as possible to help support communities that have been devastated. We need to look after our Public Service, not sack our public servants. I commend the motion to the House.