




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Natural Disaster Events of 2013

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.09 pm): Among the many financial challenges facing Queensland is just how we will meet the cost of the natural disasters that have hit our state this year—disasters that the Premier mentioned in his statement to the House. Continuing the rebuilding process from the most recent disasters and those of the previous two years remains an urgent priority. While the human cost of this year's floods and storm damage from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald is hard to define, we are getting a clearer picture of the real financial cost. Based on the latest estimates, the cost of the 2013 natural disasters is set to be just over \$2.5 billion. Reconstruction of local government infrastructure and state controlled roads will make up the lion's share of the repair bill. More than half the cost has been in payments to local authorities with repairs to council infrastructure costing in excess of \$1.3 billion. Repairs to state controlled roads will run to around \$900 million. This compares to a repair bill of just over \$2 billion after the 2012 floods and the massive cost of more than \$7 billion incurred after the flood and cyclone disasters of 2011.

How we rebuild and from where we get the funds to rebuild are important considerations as we move towards the coming state budget. We need to be sure that what we rebuild is better than what we lost and will withstand future weather events to build Queensland's resilience. Importantly, this also addresses the growing concerns around increasing insurance premiums in increasingly flood affected areas. To this end, the Newman government stands ready to contribute \$100 million to a betterment fund on a dollar for dollar basis with the Commonwealth. Up to this point the Commonwealth had only been prepared to put \$40 million towards the prospects of rebuilding Queensland into a betterment fund to enable us to carry out those tasks.

As with everything this government does, we are planning for the future, and to simply reconstruct damaged infrastructure to its predisaster standard is not an option in disaster-prone areas. Our government is about building stronger, more resilient infrastructure, which is why the Premier has expanded Minister Crisafulli's role to include Community Recovery and, importantly, Resilience. Again, this action serves to clearly differentiate the Newman government from the former Labor government, which failed to submit even one betterment proposal to the Commonwealth government since the 2010-11 events. The former government was happy to continue the madness of forcing councils to repeatedly replace the same infrastructure in the same place that will be damaged again in the next disaster.

Whilst we can never flood-proof Queensland, we can rebuild in a better way which will make it easier for communities to bounce back. Once again the actions being taken by the Newman government ensure that Queensland is a great state with great opportunity.