




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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DISASTER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (4.29 pm): I rise to speak to the Disaster Management Amendment Bill 2014. The policy objective of the Disaster Management Amendment Bill 2014 is to create a new cabinet committee called the QDMC to replace the DMCC and the SDMG and formally allow direct ministerial participation in the strategic management of disaster events.

The explanatory notes state that the formation of the QDMC will simplify Queensland's disaster management structure by reducing one layer of governance and allowing a direct line of communication between the QDMC and the State Disaster Coordinator and the State Recovery Coordinator. This would result in faster and better informed decision making during a disaster event. The background is that the DMA establishes a management structure of three tiers to respond to and prepare for disasters at a local, district and state level through the creation of disaster management groups for these respective areas.

Those living in North Queensland have been faced with many disasters. We have cyclones buzzing around year in and year out, especially during the cyclone season or the monsoonal wet season. We have had Cyclone Larry and Cyclone Yasi and last year Cyclone Oswald. I feel that there has been good disaster management over the years. I feel that during Cyclone Larry Peter Beattie did a great job. Likewise, during Cyclone Yasi and the floods in Brisbane Anna Bligh did a great job. I feel that Campbell Newman did a great job as well with regard to disaster management during the floods in Brisbane. There is one thing that we have to be careful about. During Cyclone Oswald we had politicians parachuting in everywhere promising things and saying that they were there to help.

This new legislation outlines the ministers who will be on the committee. Obviously, the Premier, the Minister for Local Government, the Minister for Trade and others are on that committee. We have to be careful that politicians are not seen to be doing the job of our emergency services personnel or SES volunteers. Sometimes politicians get in the way. We see politicians become weather forecasters and tell people what time the tide is going to come in. They can go overboard to the point that it becomes a joke. That is what happened last year with Cyclone Oswald. Politicians were parachuting in.

What we see is the operation of our emergency services, which are very important to us, become a part of political promotion for political parties. I will not say one side or the other, but that has been the case. We want to see red tape cut, but we also want to ensure that politicians do not stand in the way of the good people who are doing the hard work and become the mouthpiece. I feel that that is very important.

In the last 10 years we have had politicians parachute in. While we have been cut off—10 days during Larry and Yasi—a lot of vehicles used the inland highway. There have been a lot of times when that has been cut off. That is why I have pushed for areas around Basalt Creek, Clarke Creek, Hann Creek, Fletcher Creek, Stockyard Creek and Snake Creek to be upgraded so we can have an inland highway. We have politicians who keep bringing up the inland highway. That is what the

Minister for Local Government said. We are not seeing this inland highway. Next year we do not want to see politicians step in the way and take on all the roles and all the glory and then promise the inland highway and us not see it.

In the background section of the report it states—

At the State level, the DMA establishes the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) which is tasked with a range of high-level disaster management functions within the State across the four phases of disaster management, namely: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

I think prevention, preparedness, response and recovery is very important. I saw the devastation and destruction of Cyclone Yasi and to some extent the devastation and destruction of Cyclone Larry. I know the member for Hinchinbrook saw a far greater impact in his area. I saw mass devastation stretching from Charters Towers to the Atherton Tablelands. Obviously the minister's area copped the full brunt of it in Tully, Cardwell and Mission Beach.

We have to acknowledge the work of the Ergon workers. That is why we cannot sell our profitable assets. We need those people in times of disaster. The objectives of this bill are to ensure that we have people on call and ready to repair and save our infrastructure as quickly as they can. We need the Ergon depots. I believe Ergon workers were praised for their dedication and for working hard around the clock. We need to ensure that we have ownership of those assets and not anyone else.

In speaking to the Disaster Management Amendment Bill, I congratulate the volunteers. We want good governance and not government for glory when it comes to disasters. We do not want to glorify disasters. We want to be there to ensure that the job is done. I want to bring that to the attention of the House.