



Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2014

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Natural Disaster Preparedness**

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.16 pm): Here in Queensland we are subject to extremes of climate. We are no strangers to storms, cyclones, floods and bushfires. We saw it last year with Tropical Cyclone Oswald and the flooding that followed, bringing destruction to 57 Queensland local government areas. With the peak summer storm season fast approaching, it is important to reflect on the challenge this poses and focus on what we can do to prepare.

This LNP government has taken a proactive approach to boosting Queensland's resilience against natural disasters. Indeed, the 2013-14 Queensland state budget was built around the themes of growth, rebuilding and resilience. That budget not only included total disaster spending of \$9.3 billion over the years from 2012-13 to 2014-15; it also included funding of \$40 million, matched by the federal government, towards betterment. After seeing the same pieces of infrastructure repaired for the second and third time in the space of just a few years, the government decided to take a new approach to disaster funding. Since that budget we have seen some fantastic improvements to infrastructure in local communities across the state—whether it is the flood levees we have funded in towns and cities like Roma, St George, Mundubbera, Bundaberg and Cairns or whether it is the water intake plant on the banks of Burnett River in Gayndah which has been moved upstream of the Claude Wharton Weir and made stronger after it was destroyed in 2011 and again in 2013, only weeks after being repaired.

Natural disasters are inevitable in Queensland. That is why this government also has a plan to put aside funding to cover the costs of future disasters. Not only will our proposed Strong Choices final plan secure Queensland's future finances; it includes a \$500 million Future Fund to secure Queensland against the next wave of disasters. We may not know what they will be but we know that they certainly will be here. The objective of the Future Fund, which is part of the \$8.6 billion Strong Choices Future Investment Program, is to allocate that \$500 million, together with any interest accruing, to meet the state's share of disaster recovery costs. This funding is focused on restoring communities, rebuilding their productive capacity, assisting people to remain on the land and ensuring agricultural production is restored. It would only be utilised whenever there is a natural disaster relief and recovery arrangement activation.

At the time I said that the 2013-14 budget put a down payment on resilience but it was unfinished business for the LNP government. Our efforts in this area show that we are serious about improving Queensland's capacity to cope with these disasters. We know that there is more work to be done, but this government has a strong plan to build a stronger future for all Queenslanders.