



Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**


**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 May 2015

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**South-East Queensland, Severe Weather Event**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.23 pm): The events of last Friday left an indelible mark on the electorate of Glass House. Tragically, that mark is very physical and tangible in the loss of four local lives. It is very physical and obvious in the damage to homes and infrastructure. But it is also a very emotional mark, too, in the pained faces of those who have lost loved ones, their homes and belongings, or their livelihoods.

I must begin by acknowledging the four constituents of Glass House who, distressingly, lost their lives: 74-year-old Tony McDonald, his five-year-old grandson, Tyler, and Tyler's 39-year-old mother, Tamra, who were swept away from a road north of Caboolture. Shortly behind them, 49-year-old Emmett O'Brien and his son Keegan and stepdaughter Tegan were swept away at the same location. Miraculously, Keegan and Tegan survived and were rescued. Emmett, Tony, Tamra and young Tyler perished in the floodwaters.

For the small community of Elimbah the loss is incredibly real and incredibly painful. All four people had connections to the Elimbah State School. Emmett was a former parent. For Tyler and his family, the connection was far more present. Tyler started prep this year and I am informed that, after some initial teething issues, he was having an absolute ball. When I spoke to acting principal Mrs Tracy Sharpe early yesterday morning, it is clear that the school community is suffering, but equally I thank the education department for wrapping an amazing level of support around the students, teachers, administrators, parents and the broader community. To Mrs Sharpe, if there is more that we can do, please do not hesitate to ask.

I must also acknowledge the passing of Mr Robert Leong at Burpengary that same afternoon. I grew up in Burpengary. My parents still live there and as recently as this morning I drove past the site that claimed Mr Leong's life. If members know the area, it will give them a very poignant demonstration of the size and ferocity of that flash flooding.

Each of these tragic deaths will also serve as an enduring reminder: if it is flooded, forget it. I say to people: please, please, please heed the warnings. Resist the temptation to cross flooded creeks. It is simply not worth it. The price may be more than people can humanly afford.

On Saturday morning, I was able to safely venture out and check on the welfare of locals who I know from previous experience would have been impacted by the intense rainfall and flash flooding. I met Taryn and Stephen on Flowers Road at Caboolture. They had already been at the clean-up for several hours, their child blissfully playing in the puddles and among their belongings drying to the sun. For them, Friday's deluge surprised them with its intensity and how quickly the water rose and dissipated. Life will continue for Taryn and Stephen, but I will be working with the Moreton Bay Regional Council to ensure that a roadside rubbish collection happens quickly.

I met Steve and Donna Smith on Male Road, Caboolture, and Steve's aunt, Diane, the property owner. Water had roared through the house at thigh height, so everything they owned is destroyed or is going to take money and time to repair. Following a visit from Energex yesterday it has been confirmed that the house is unsafe to reside in. The challenge is that Donna is 32 weeks pregnant and is now in search of a home. Thankfully, they have been paid a visit by Red Cross and, hopefully, support will kick in shortly. On that note, I acknowledge this morning's declaration of the Male Road, Dances Road and Flowers Road communities so that residents such as Taryn and Stephen and Donna and Steve can now access the assistance that they so desperately require.

Friday's torrential rain also impacted on the farmers of the Glass House electorate. Yesterday, I spoke with Peter Young, a strawberry farmer from Glass House Mountains. He and his farmhands are furiously trying to save what they can of 100,000 strawberry plants. In his words, the whole hill has come away and slid towards the creek and it has taken the plants and plastic with it. Even if Peter is able to save his strawberries, he is now a least a month behind the eight ball. By the time they are ready to pick the strawberries, the season may be over. Again, I say to the Premier and Minister for Agriculture to please consider the plight of farmers from Beerwah to Caboolture in their disaster declarations as the floods could not have come at a worse time. I ask them to please provide them with the assistance that they as a government can.

Before I conclude, I would like to touch briefly on a matter that I believe will need further investigation. My office and I have been inundated by stories of commuters left stranded on Friday night. At the outset, let me acknowledge that the decision to stay off the roads was made by someone other than the transport minister. I also appreciate the need for Transport to look after the safety and wellbeing of its own staff. However, there have been many stories that tell me that we could have done more. In one instance, commuters were left at the Petrie station. They were told to alight from the train and stood shivering in the rain for four hours. We could have let them back on the train. It was still there. It is a matter that I will take up with the appropriate minister in due course.