




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Murrumbidgee Electorate

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (12.23 pm): The Palaszczuk government knew that we would face challenges in the first 100 days, and in Queensland that always includes floods and cyclones. I think we have shown how we are meeting these challenges and getting on with the job of looking after everyday Queenslanders.

The flood recovery centres at Morayfield and Rothwell are now closed, but the community recovery team from the department of communities is still working with those residents who are in need of emergency support. They have visited 457 households in the Moreton Bay area and seen up to 1,500 people. Thank you again to the Minister for Communities for the hard work and empathetic response of her staff.

I have held street meetings with residents to hear their concerns about the flooding. The repairs of many of these houses are well advanced, and from this week on people will be moving back into some of these houses. The residents need new or near-new furniture. I think that every house in Major Street, Deception Bay lost almost every bit of furniture. If local businesses and local residents can donate any new or near new furniture, I urge them to contact GIVIT to arrange their donation.

At this stage we also need to turn our attention to the sporting clubs which were hit by the floods. Volunteers are still cleaning up clubs such as the Redcliffe Tigers AFL, the Redcliffe Horse and Pony Club and the Deception Bay Junior Rugby League Club. They face losing some of their home game rounds or competition days, which are vital fundraisers for them. I thank the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing for hearing me out about assistance needed for flood-affected sports clubs. They are a crucial, but often forgotten, sector of the community when floods hit.

The Minister for Communities has also asked me what we can learn from this, and my suggestion is that we need a dedicated coordinator on the ground within the first 48 hours to specifically coordinate volunteers. People who come forward in these times to lend a hand often say, 'Tell me what to do.' In the first 48 hours there is a huge amount of effort needed to get debris into skips and to clean mud out of houses. We need someone on the ground with a phone in their hand to liaise full time with all stakeholders and direct anyone who comes looking to help—someone who is not afraid to get mud on their boots and dirt on their hands. I think that local government is best placed to initiate such a move, and I appreciate the opportunity from the Minister for Communities to make this suggestion.

It is National Volunteer Week, so it is timely for me to thank volunteers who have contributed to this recovery effort. I particularly want to pay tribute to local resident Natasha Rigby who, on the day after the flood, distributed food and water amongst her neighbours. After that she continually cooked food for meals, barbecued endless sausages and baked countless lamingtons—all off her own bat.

She acted as an informal liaison person to facilitate donations getting to residents and, more importantly, residents have credited her with lifting their spirits.

I would also like to say well done to the Deception Bay SES, which moved in quickly and coordinated the volunteers who came through Volunteering Queensland. They were energised on the day by meeting the Minister for Emergency Services and seeing the Premier coming in and talking to residents on the Sunday. I would like to thank the Deception Bay Lions for getting their food van out at the time; Arthur and Lynn Hayes; Robbie Jones; Colin Sorrenson; Des Hayes; Brian Sylvester and Emily Kinaston. Also thank you to Remax ultimate salespeople Debra Qalo, Mark Cheney and Tony Filipovic, who gave a generous donation to the flood recovery efforts. I also acknowledge the Lighthouse Centre Deception Bay for helping me sort out the variety of donations that have been left in my office, which has become a staging point for donations for local residents. Many donations are still there, and I encourage flood-affected residents to come and access these items. Thanks again to the Moreton Bay Regional Council, Mayor Allan Sutherland and Councillor Julie Greer for their stellar efforts. They have been with residents on the ground and working closely with the state government.

This government is rising to meet the challenges that have been presented to us in the first 100 days of this government. I thank the state government for quickly and thoroughly meeting this most Queensland of challenges in such a coordinated and empathetic manner. I know this government and community will keep on building community resilience well into the future.