



Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**


**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 19 May 2015

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (12.18 pm): On 1 May of this year there was heavy rainfall across almost all of South-East Queensland. We have heard much about the terrible flooding to the north of Brisbane, and I take nothing away from those communities that have really suffered through that terrible flooding event. However, I also believe it is very important to highlight the disaster which also unfolded to Brisbane's west, in the suburbs around Wivenhoe Pocket and Ipswich. I believe they have been completely forgotten as has the damage that the water releases from Wivenhoe Dam caused downstream. I say the unnecessary fast water releases caused damage to downstream Brisbane River landholders along with problems at Colleges Crossing.

Landholders in my electorate were provided with alerts. At 8.07 pm there was a text message which said that Seqwater had commenced releases at 8 pm and they would be slowly increasing to 400 cubic metres per second. This is well below the safe levels for pumps to remain in the river, and that is well known by my landholders and Seqwater. At 8.20 pm they then received a text saying that controlled gate releases would slowly increase, but overnight the Brisbane River rose 4.5 metres and properties were flooded, pumps went completely under and riverbanks were washed away. On Saturday, 2 May at noon they received a text message advising that various road crossings would be closed. Three days later on Tuesday, 5 May at 7 pm Seqwater then advised that gate releases had ceased.

One of my constituents, Mr Matt Brooks, contacted my office to let me know about the debacle that had occurred. He lost an irrigation pump worth in the vicinity of \$6,000, so needless to say he was fairly disappointed with what happened and the late notice. Then I heard more stories. Tammy Strong and her father, David, also lost their irrigation pump after trying for hours in the rain and dark—you have to remember that this is 8 pm—to retrieve it from the river before levels rose even further. They thought they got it high enough, but come Saturday morning they could see it had gone under. In total 18 landholders have lost pumps and infrastructure to the approximate value of \$157,000 and I ask: where is their compensation? I ask the minister what he is doing for not only my constituents but also those of the member for Ipswich West. Furthermore, there was bank slumping and damage to some 22 properties in excess of some \$200,000. Fortunately no lives were lost, but due to this ineptness a number of people were put in very dangerous situations, having to work in the dark on wet banks trying to save their pumps. I will be providing a full list of these landholders and their losses to Minister Bailey for further investigation.

It is obvious that, despite promises to the contrary, the lessons from 2011 and 2013 still have not been learned when it comes to notifying landholders downstream of the Wivenhoe Dam about potentially damaging water releases. Mid-Brisbane River irrigators were literally left in the dark and not properly notified of those releases. I ask Minister Bailey: why were landholders not notified about

the initial release until seven minutes after it began? The question on everyone's lips is why was so much water released so quickly? We know that Wivenhoe Dam has a full storage capacity of 1.165 million megalitres. We are coming into the dry season, and the rain event was expected to slow and head away. Why was water not released more slowly? Knowing the rain was on its way, why not release some of the water earlier in the week? Why did they release water so quickly that it ripped out the riverbanks, increased the water height downstream to flood levels and then knocked out key infrastructure like Colleges Crossing so that hundreds of children could not catch the bus across.

These questions need to be answered by Minister Bailey, who needs to get out there and visit the people of Wivenhoe pocket and further downstream, because I know full well that the people of Ipswich are also asking these questions.