




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Record of Proceedings, 14 July 2015

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Ravenshoe, Community Recovery

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.54 am): On Tuesday, 9 June, an out-of-control vehicle crashed into a gas bottle at a cafe in Ravenshoe, causing an explosion that injured many and that has claimed the lives of two people. I was a regular at the cafe and could not drive past without grabbing a coffee, crumbed fish and some of Nicole's amazing caramel fudge. It was a great place to stop and have a chat. When I see the footage of the explosion, I still struggle to connect this to the town of Ravenshoe. This event has impacted severely on local residents and surrounding communities and we are deeply saddened by this tragic accident. I extend my deepest sympathy to the families and friends of Nicole Dempsey and Margaret Clark and to those who continue to recover from their injuries.

There are many stories of bravery and courage of those who assisted on the day: mates helping mates, strangers helping strangers; stories of help appearing out of nowhere just moments after the blast. No-one was afraid to pitch in and help. The people of Ravenshoe should all be incredibly proud of how they responded, supporting and encouraging one another. I take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the paramedic who was first on the scene. This man is a true local hero. I further pay tribute to each and every person who provided assistance. This was a joint community effort and everyone who was involved in this tragic event should be incredibly proud of the part that they played.

On behalf of the people of Ravenshoe, I want to thank each and every person who has donated money, time and goods. I heard a story about a 12-year-old boy who gave his only \$50 to help those injured. There have been many fundraising events—from pizzas and music, cent sales and sausage sizzles. Buckets and cash tins are placed in many shops and this community has dug very deep to support their own. I am advised that GIVIT has raised just over \$400,000. Life in Ravenshoe continues at its usual pace, but things in town just are not the same. The floral tributes in front of the burnt building are a stark reminder of how quickly life can be taken, how quickly life can change. It reminds me to count my blessings, care for my loved ones and never be afraid of the challenges you face daily.

I thank all state government ministers who have visited Ravenshoe to share the grief and hear the stories of those who have been impacted by this horrific accident. Minister Jo-Ann Miller was on the scene within 24 hours and provided much support, assistance and encouragement. Treasurer Curtis Pitt spent hours on a cold, wet Saturday talking with people in the street and laying a floral tribute. Jackie Trad as Acting Premier encouraged the Queensland Rail CEO to visit Ravenshoe with her which resulted in some much needed funding and support for the Ravenshoe heritage railway. Minister Cameron Dick travelled to Ravenshoe from Atherton Hospital after presenting staff at the hospital with awards for providing such excellent service in less than ideal conditions. I also acknowledge the visit from John-Paul Langbroek and thank Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss for his attendance.

These visits are so appreciated by the people of Ravenshoe and are evidence that they have not been forgotten and that we share their pain. It also gives ministers a greater understanding of how remote this town is from medical services and the challenges that will be encountered by those who have to travel long distances to Atherton and Cairns for ongoing treatment. I received advice from the Minister for Communities that her department will provide additional funding to the Ravenshoe Community Centre of up to \$159,500. This is so greatly appreciated and needed and I thank the minister for approving this funding.

One thing I keep hearing is that right after the explosion many of the people rushing to help knew what to do. This was not coincidental. After being hit by cyclones Larry and Yasi, many people in my electorate volunteered for first-aid training and became members of community disaster teams. On the day of the blast, many of those who were helping were trained in first aid. We must be very proud of this achievement and I urge the government to approve the funding of the community development officer so that Ravenshoe can continue with their recovery, with building resilience and with identifying and sourcing community development projects. I also thank all MPs and parliamentary staff who responded to my request to dig deep and support the community of Ravenshoe. Together we have made a big difference.