




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

**MOTION: NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (2.55 pm): I too rise to address the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. Like the member for Indooroopilly, the shadow Treasurer, I am a little bit bemused at the timing of this debate. As the member for Indooroopilly said, I suspect it does have a lot to do with the fact that we are two days into the federal election. I can just picture the phone call this morning. The phone rings in the Deputy Premier's office. 'DP, it's BS.' 'Sorry, who?' It is probably just as well he rang the Deputy Premier and not the Minister for Education, because if he had rung the Minister for Education this morning she would have said, 'Bill who? Sorry, I'm not sure who you're referring to.' Bill would have given the Deputy Premier a ring this morning and said, 'Mate, my approval rating has plateaued. I need a little bit of help. We need you to jump up in parliament today and have a crack at Malcolm Turnbull and his budget through Scott Morrison.' It is no wonder there have been these political machinations today by the Deputy Premier around disaster funding.

To pick up on what the member for Keppel just said, the only ones politicising disasters are those opposite. All of us in this chamber have experienced the impact of disasters on our electorates, and we know the very real impact they have on the physical wellbeing of our constituents, our infrastructure and the livelihoods of our communities and businesses. That does not just apply to those communities in the north, and I respect that many of my colleagues in this chamber, including my good friend the member for Hinchinbrook, have been through a lot in previous years with cyclones. All of us have experienced the impact of those disasters, so what we have here is nothing more than base politics by those opposite.

Like others who have spoken on this side of the chamber, I had to pause for a moment when I heard the Deputy Premier reading out her notice of motion this morning because it sounded awfully familiar. I pulled up a *Courier-Mail* article and the headline reads, 'Queensland Treasurer accuses federal government of withholding disaster recovery payments'. You might be mistaken for assuming that was from today, but it is not: it is from 4 February 2013. It goes on to say—

Queensland Treasurer Tim Nicholls says the federal government is withholding \$725 million in disaster recovery payments dating back as far as 2006.

Mr Nicholls has written to his federal counterpart Wayne Swan, demanding he reconsider the decision to withhold the money.

As the now Leader of the Opposition pointed out, whilst he wrote to the then treasurer Wayne Swan to seek that money it was not forthcoming. What did we do? We plugged the gap through careful economic management at the state level to make sure that our communities got the disaster recovery funding that they needed for infrastructure and other projects that were required. What we have here is a government that is unable to do that because they do not know how to manage the budget, and they certainly do not know how to run an economy.

Not only did we pick up the slack, but we went further and under the then premier Campbell Newman the department of local government, community recovery and resilience was set up. We had a debate about the futility of continuing to throw good money after bad at fixing problems, only to see them reoccur the next time a disaster came through and the importance of building resilience into our infrastructure in our communities so that they could withstand future disasters.

One example in my own electorate is the Grigor Bridge over the Mary River at Conondale. It was taken out in a number of floods over the 90 years that timber bridge existed. When push came to shove and it finally got to a point that it could no longer be repaired and was to be replaced, we were going to get a new concrete bridge at exactly the same height. All that would have happened was that the new concrete bridge would keep getting whacked by flood after flood. Through my lobbying of then Major General Mick Slater and the government of the day, we now have an elevated bridge over the Mary River at Conondale that does not flood and does not close for any reason. That is a sign of a common-sense government that knows how to manage its budget, that knows how to run the economy and that can work with what is given to it at the time.