




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MOTION: NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.50 pm): Yet again we see the Turnbull government changing the rules to suit themselves, deferring over \$1 billion in natural disaster funding due to the Queensland government without any consultation or advice. Despite meeting all of its obligations in submitting its claim for reimbursement under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements—which has already been spent to get our communities back on their feet—the Turnbull government says they cannot pay up because they have not done their homework on time. This is particularly galling, as the Turnbull government had already publicly stated its provision for this payment in the federal midyear economic financial outlook published in December 2015.

The Commonwealth at no time indicated a change in timing for the reimbursement of these funds to the state. On top of this, the Commonwealth government is now trying to shift the blame by saying that the Queensland government has made false claims for disaster funding and is being investigated by the Australian National Audit Office. These comments are totally misleading and ill informed. The Queensland government is not aware of any investigation by the Australian National Audit Office of Queensland's NDRRA claims. The report did not even look at Queensland: it looked at New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

Friday, 20 February 2015 was a harrowing day for Central Queenslanders. I have spoken many times in this place about the devastating impact of Tropical Cyclone Marcia on our community. I am sick of the Turnbull-Abbott government turning their backs on disaster affected regions like Central Queensland, but this is not the first time they have done it. First they took their sweet time approving category D funding under the NDRRA after Cyclone Marcia, they refused to honour the \$198.6 million in NDRRA funding requested under category D and then the Turnbull government showed its true colours when it comes to supporting regional Queensland, approving a measly \$27.75 million, which is absolutely nothing compared to the \$198 million needed to get CQ back on its feet. In fact, \$26.75 million only comprises about 14 per cent of the total requested.

Tony Abbott said that the overall impact of Tropical Cyclone Marcia was 'not of an exceptional nature compared to Tropical Cyclone Oswald or Yasi'. His words are a real slap in the face to the local families and businesses that had their lives torn apart by an extreme natural disaster. I table the list of category D proposals for Tropical Cyclone Marcia and a comparison between the amount requested by the state and councils and the amount approved.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, titled 'Category D proposals for Tropical Cyclone Marcia' [\[647\]](#).

There are iconic projects for Livingston and Rockhampton, for which about \$18 million was requested and nil approved. In terms of the agricultural recovery package, \$21 million was requested and \$750,000 approved. Now they are refusing to pay NDRRA funding, but they do not mind claiming credit for the recovery. In December the Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan, and the Deputy Premier issued a joint press release about NDRRA funding to help fix the Kershaw Gardens in Rockhampton. It

says that this assistance is 'being provided under category D of the jointly funded Commonwealth-state Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements'. It further states—

The Australian and Queensland governments are committed to working together to assist affected communities and their local councils recover from natural disasters.

Yet they are not willing to pay up. They like to take credit for the recovery, but they still have not paid their bill. The member for Capricornia, for example, has been in photograph after photograph showing off the disaster recovery works funded under the NDRRA arrangements like the Kershaw Gardens just before Christmas. This local park was decimated by Tropical Cyclone Marcia but repaired using NDRRA funding which the federal government has not yet coughed up to the state. The member for Capricornia talks about how great it is that the federal government has supported reconstruction after the cyclone, but of course he does not mention that the federal government does not intend to pay the bill as agreed. It is like when you go out to lunch with a friend but they forget their wallet. 'Oh, how convenient!' With friends it is all swings and roundabouts so it would be okay if it is your friend, but I can assure you that the Turnbull government is no friend of Queensland because \$1 billion in disaster recovery payments is a little more than covering your mate's lunch.

Stripping our state of this \$1 billion is a slap in the face for Queenslanders as they continue to recover from the unprecedented series of weather events that have hit our state in recent years. We cannot let disaster funding become about politics; it has to be about communities. I have seen firsthand how the Palaszczuk Labor government has prioritised the recovery of disaster impacted communities in Queensland—

(Time expired)