




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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ADJOURNMENT

Ipswich, Sinkhole

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (12.07 am): I rise to speak about the recent and now world famous sinkhole that appeared in a backyard in Basin Pocket in Ipswich on Monday, 2 August 2016. People right around the world saw images of an enormous hole around eight metres wide and some six metres deep filled with swirling water and threatening to swallow up Lynn and Ray McKay's much loved Hills Hoist clothesline. The McKays and their neighbours were just going about their routine Monday morning activities when they heard, in the words of Lynn McKay, 'a bang and a sploosh and when I looked over, there was a hole!' I commend the Mayor of Ipswich, Paul Pisasale, Councillor Wayne Wendt and Ipswich City Council officers who acted quickly. I commend engineers and officers from the Department of Natural Resources and Mines from the Abandoned Mines Unit who immediately assessed the situation to ensure the safety of the McKays and nearby residents.

Paramount importance was given to the safety and wellbeing of the McKays, with the Ipswich City Council arranging temporary accommodation for them and their visiting family. On 3 August the Minister for Mines and Natural Resources, Anthony Lynham, and I visited the McKays in their home to assure them of this government's support and of our commitment to resolve the problem as soon as possible. The street was closed off and the media were out in force when we arrived. Helicopters and light aircraft were hovering above and the McKays had just done a television interview in what was left of their backyard. Not your average day in Coal Street, Basin Pocket!

I extend my thanks to Minister Lynham for his unflinching support of the McKays, both personally and financially, and for the government's forethought in not only maintaining funding of the Abandoned Mine Lands Program but for boosting the funds to \$42 million over five years. By 11 August, just nine days later, the sinkhole was nowhere to be seen. The McKays have a new back fence, newly laid turf and their beloved Hills Hoist fully intact.

Lynn and Ray McKay are people who represent much of what is good about humans and, despite the circumstances, I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know them. I know that I am not the only one. I recall on one of my visits a tomato plant had just been dropped off by Channel 7 reporter who had spent some time there.

While the McKays were visibly shaken—and who would not be—by their ordeal, their enormous courage, patience, pragmatism and good humour won the day as well as the hearts of everyone they met. I would like to acknowledge the McKays' daughter, Tracey O'Neill, who lives north of Toowoomba but who, with her two daughters, Anna, 11, and Ruth, almost nine, immediately came down to stay with Lynn and Ray to lend her support to them both throughout the disaster. The Ipswich electorate has much to offer and people like Lynn and Ray make me its very proud representative.