



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 August 2017

**MOTION**

**Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (Burdekin—LNP) (4.58 pm): I rise to speak to the motion before the House. As a former police officer, deputy of the local disaster management group and area director with Emergency Management Queensland, I feel I am qualified to speak on this motion and the delivery of assistance to alleviate the financial burden on states and territories. The Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, or NDRRA as it is commonly known, also supports the provision of urgent financial assistance to disaster affected communities. There are four categories of assistance. I note that the member for South Brisbane is referring to category D—that is, an act of relief or recovery carried out to alleviate distress or damage in circumstances that are exceptional.

There is no question that Cyclone Debbie caused massive damage and destruction when it crossed the North Queensland coast near Airlie Beach on 28 March. The clean-up operation which commenced immediately after the cyclone is ongoing. Let me assure all members here tonight that there are residents and businesses in the affected area that are still waiting for tradies to turn up and repair their properties. There are still homes in Bowen that have no power supply and are vacant. They are waiting for tradies to come along and reconnect their power.

Only last week I had the pleasure of attending the Bowen Outdoor Camping and Disposals store owned and operated by Gordon and Anne Little, which only reopened a couple of weeks ago. That is a long time to go without an income. It has been a long road to recovery for these communities in my electorate. For the residents in Bowen and Collinsville it will be some time before they fully recover from this event.

The delivery of assistance following a natural disaster is subject to strict guidelines. Unfortunately, the track record of those opposite leaves a lot to be desired when applying for NDRRA funding. Who could forget their bumbling efforts in the past that left Queensland out of pocket to the tune of \$800 million, including \$153 million which was claimed for ineligible projects. No wonder the Queensland Auditor-General was scathing in their assessment of Queensland's claims. It goes to show that if people do not get it right or try to pull the wool over the eyes of the assessment team they will not be funded. The fact that \$150 million worth of works continues to be ineligible highlights just how wrong the Labor government got it when it came to making those claims.

Who could forget the debacle that unfolded at the Whitsunday Regional Council following Cyclone Ului which crossed the coast in March 2010. The Whitsunday Regional Council, under the watch of then mayor Mike Brunner—that is right, the Labor candidate for Burdekin—made a number of ineligible claims following Cyclone Ului which almost sent the council bankrupt. It took years to pay those funds back and it was the ratepayers who shouldered the burden. There is a very clear message here about the need to get it right.

It is obvious that those opposite did not learn from their mistakes because, as members will recall, this year they again tried to pull the wool over the eyes of the federal government following Cyclone Debbie by submitting claims for category C which were incomplete and then had the hide to cry foul when the claims were initially knocked back. NDRRA is not a slush fund and it is certainly not there to prop up a government that is desperately attempting to access funding for infrastructure projects—projects like a levee bank in Rockhampton. I wonder whose seat is centred around that project? That is a \$60 million capital works project that this government is trying to fund with category D funding. This is being done with the sole intention of propping up the member for Rockhampton at the next election.

My electorate of Burdekin and the neighbouring electorate of Whitsunday were absolutely smashed during Cyclone Debbie. I will fight for every cent we are eligible for under the provisions of NDRRA. I say to the Deputy Premier, 'Send me copies of your applications and I will give you a guarantee here tonight that I will fully support those claims which are legitimate and eligible under the NDRRA criteria.' I will always support genuine claims for disaster assistance that are supported by a well-researched and legitimate business case.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr LAST:** This is no laughing matter. This is serious. Those communities in North Queensland that were impacted by this cyclone were absolutely devastated.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr LAST:** Someone over there thinks it is hilarious. During and after times of disaster all levels of government should work cooperatively to ensure affected communities are supported through the recovery phase. I certainly hope the Deputy Premier has submitted the appropriate business cases to support the claim for category D funding in this instance. Our communities need it and our residents deserve it.