




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2017

MOTION: NATURAL DISASTERS, RECOVERY ASSISTANCE

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.54 pm): The performance from the government members here tonight in debating this particular motion is nothing short of disgraceful when you consider what has happened in the Whitsundays following Cyclone Debbie. I was there. I was on the ground. I slept on the ground in the aftermath of that cyclone to help with the clean-up. I worked with the SES workers and the Defence Force and the council workers, so I know firsthand what that community went through and what they are still going through.

The motion moved by the member for South Brisbane tonight should be seen for what it is: a desperate attempt by a financially strapped Labor government to get the federal government to prop up their budget bottom line. That should come as no surprise when we look at the pitiful track record of this do-nothing government when it comes to delivering crucial infrastructure in this state.

Labor axed the LNP's Royalties for the Regions that built flood mitigation projects and built more resilient infrastructure. They failed to continue the LNP's Betterment Fund and, following Cyclone Debbie, they failed to complete the necessary NDRRA funding request forms, with more than \$161 million deemed ineligible following the assessment process. What a damning indictment on the Deputy Premier that is! How do you, Deputy Premier, explain that to Queenslanders? Will you go into North Queensland and explain to the residents, the businesses and the councils how you stuffed up and how you failed in your performance of your duties as Deputy Premier of this state?

This is the second occasion the Deputy Premier has moved a motion in this House on this issue. Let me reiterate my challenge to the Deputy Premier on the last occasion: show me the business case for the claims that you have submitted; show me the evidence and the impact information to support your application, because this is not a lucky dip. There are stringent guidelines to be met regarding NDRRA funding, and history shows that there are significant repercussions for those who get it wrong.

Let us look at the track record of those opposite when it comes to applying for NDRRA funding. Who could forget their bumbling efforts in the past which 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 his assessment of Queensland's claims. It goes to show that if you do not get it right or you try to pull the wool over the eyes of the assessment team you will not be funded. The fact that \$161 million worth of works continues to be ineligible highlights the sheer incompetence of this Labor government.

Who could forget—certainly my colleague the member for Whitsunday highlighted this as well—the absolute debacle which occurred at the Whitsunday Regional Council under the watch of Mike Bruncker when he made a number of ineligible claims following Cyclone Ului which almost sent that council bankrupt? It took years to pay back those funds 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, they again tried to pull the

wool over the eyes of the federal government following Cyclone Debbie by submitting claims for category C funding which were incomplete and then had the hide to cry foul when those claims were knocked back.

NDRRA is not a slush fund and it is certainly not there to prop up this incompetent government, which is desperately attempting to access funding for infrastructure projects it has been unable to deliver—projects like a levee bank in Rockhampton. I wonder whose seat is centred around that project, a \$60 million capital works project—that is right; a capital works project—that this government is trying to fund—

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I know the member is keen not to talk about the motion and to talk about everything else, but I ask him to be relevant and address why he is selling out his community and not standing up to Canberra.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr LAST: I am talking about a \$60 million capital works project that this government is trying to fund with category D funding with the sole intention of propping up the member for Rockhampton at the next election.

There is no question that Cyclone Debbie caused massive damage and destruction when it crossed the North Queensland coast on 28 March this year. I will always support genuine claims for disaster assistance that are supported by a well-researched and legitimate business case. What I will not support are claims that are designed to help bail out a government that is floundering and unable to deliver the infrastructure we so desperately need in North Queensland.