




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 10 August 2017

MOTION

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.42 pm): It is quite shameful to sit here and listen to the member for Glass House not stand up for his colleague from the Whitsundays who is desperate to get this funding in his electorate. The member for Whitsunday wrote to the Prime Minister begging to have the funding in his electorate. It is outrageous for the member for Glass House to trivialise what actually needs to be done. It is shameful that he cannot support his own member. He needs to get up to the Whitsundays and see the devastation. He should be embarrassed. The member needs to stand up for all of Queensland not just for the south-east corner. The member should get out of his own backyard and see the suffering of the people in the Whitsundays. He should be embarrassed. I table the letter from the member for Whitsunday. He stands up for his electorate.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 21 July 2017, from the member for Whitsunday, Mr Jason Costigan MP, to the Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Turnbull, regarding disaster recovery funding for the Whitsundays [\[1306\]](#).

Those opposite do not seem to realise that Cyclone Debbie wreaked havoc across the Mackay region. It was a shocking weather event. It wrecked homes, beaches and our rail and road systems. Thousands of residents experienced power outages for days. My neighbourhood lost power for four days. These communities just got on with it. They know that the power will be put back on and everybody will get in and help.

Many small businesses in my community, even though their businesses were not wrecked, lost income for weeks because they had power outages. They were still paying their staff and they are still struggling today to make up for that lost income. When cyclones hit, it does not just cause trees to come down and roofs to come off, the whole community is affected in a lot of different ways. Those opposite need to understand that.

The Mackay community, the community that I am proud to represent, has had to deal with tough times over the past four months. We did not anticipate that we would have a heartless response from the federal government. The Palaszczuk Labor government was quick to pledge its support for the recovery effort. We put \$110 million on the table to help Queensland communities recover. Malcolm Turnbull's miserable commitment to fund just \$29 million out of a requested \$110 million is a complete slap in the face for my community. To put this in perspective, the federal government's share of the disaster funding equates to just 0.006 per cent of the entire federal budget.

Disappointingly, out of the \$135 million requested for the local council package, the feds stumped up just \$1.5 million to be shared between the Airlie Beach foreshore and the Mackay Blue Water Trail. Needless to say, this will go nowhere near fixing the damage to these assets. I do not think Mr Turnbull would put up with the foreshore of Sydney Harbour being twisted and wrecked with debris all over it. It would be fixed up pretty quickly.

Importantly, of the \$10 million in the economic package which would help businesses to recover, the federal government approved just \$2.1 million, again a huge blow to the cyclone affected economies. When wages are taken out of the community due to shutdowns after cyclones, discretionary spending dries up. This affects all of our small businesses. Our cafes, mechanics and clothing stores are all feeling the pain months after the cyclone. My community deserves better and the federal LNP member for Dawson, George Christensen, knows it. He has been quoted as saying, 'I'm gutted to see the quantum of funding that has been delivered in this area', and describing the federal government commitment as paltry. Everybody agrees that it is paltry except those opposite.