




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Tropical Cyclone Debbie, Energy and Transport Services

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (10.17 am): I would like to inform the House of Queensland's unsung heroes who worked day and night across large parts of our state to restore electricity, repair our road network and manage our dams during and after Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

On the electricity front, across Queensland nearly 270,000 Queenslanders lost power. The effort to restore electricity involved more than 1,300 workers from Ergon, Energex, Powerlink and also some field crew from New South Wales Essential Energy. For the first time, hundreds of power workers with their equipment were pre-deployed north, south and within the impact zone ready to respond to the emergency. When I inspected North Queensland, I saw power workers swarming all over North Queensland, getting the work done in repairing our smashed power system as quickly as possible.

Just 14 days after Tropical Cyclone Debbie made landfall, all power had been restored to affected customers where it was safe to do so. This was the first significant coordinated response since Ergon and Energex merged under Energy Queensland. Whether it was through that predeployment or the use of our mobile generation units to get power back on swiftly and safely, all the workers did us proud.

On the roads and highways, Tropical Cyclone Debbie caused significant landslips and road damage, particularly in North Queensland, Logan, on the Gold Coast and in the Gold Coast hinterland. Over 600 Transport and Main Roads and Roadtek staff worked around the clock to undertake emergency repairs and reopen roads as quickly as possible. In the days following I witnessed firsthand some of the extensive damage. Major landslips on the Sarina and Eton ranges were so extensive that repairs will take some time, with one lane open at Eton Range. The Sarina Range will be closed for some time yet.

I inspected the John Muntz Causeway where significant reconstruction work commenced very quickly and is expected to be completed by mid this year. There is also ongoing work in the Gold Coast hinterland where we saw extensive damage. On Pine Creek Road there was a five-metre-by-five-metre washout and staff from the Department of Transport and Main Roads had that open within 36 hours, which was a fantastic effort. This was also the first time that the Yeppen south and north bridges in Rockhampton were truly tested under an extreme weather event since being funded by the previous federal and state Labor governments. They proved their worth, keeping access in and out of Rockhampton 24 hours a day for the first time, making a world of difference to everybody living in that region.

During the event our dams were closely monitored by staff from SunWater and Seqwater, who worked very hard providing updates to the community. With all dams in the Mackay region spilling, two of them experienced events of record in terms of rainfall, including Kinchant Dam. That is why I have

asked the Chief Scientist, Professor Suzanne Miller, to undertake an assessment into the operation of Kinchant Dam and warning systems for communities downstream. I was very happy to visit Kinchant with the member for Mirani very soon after the event.

I would like to pay tribute to the hard work of the member for Mackay, Julieanne Gilbert, who did magnificent work supporting her communities during such an extreme impact. Fifteen out of 23 of our ungated dams spilled and added six months supply to our drinking water. A post-event analysis demonstrated the most recent upgrade of the Hinze Dam, funded by Labor governments, was a major contributor in reducing the risk of flooding for thousands of downstream Gold Coast homes.

I thank crews across all of my departments and agencies for their magnificent and tireless efforts during the cyclone period and for their continuing work to restore services and infrastructure across Queensland. I would also like to place on record my thanks to all local government staff, mayors and leaders who worked so closely with Queensland government agencies. I also pay tribute to the work of the military, in particular the Army and Navy, which played a key role in restoring services and worked closely with local and state government to deliver such an effective response.