




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tropical Cyclone Debbie

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.35 am): Tropical Cyclone Debbie was indeed a brute of a storm. From North and Central Queensland to Wide Bay in the south-east, it smashed, it battered and it flooded. It took out homes, roads and bridges. It took with it farms and animals. Tragically, it did take human life. The devastating toll was eight dead. Our thoughts remain with those who lost loved ones. There is a damage bill of more than \$1 billion—and perhaps even more, as the Treasurer has indicated today—and a physical and emotional recovery destined to take years.

Natural disasters are not a time for politics or politicking, which is why I was pleased to join the Premier in travelling to some of the worst hit areas in a united front of support, compassion and, of course, assistance. I also joined Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, federal opposition leader Bill Shorten, the federal member for Dawson, George Christensen, and Brigadier Chris Field on the ground in the wake of the destruction in Proserpine, Airlie Beach, Mackay and Bowen. We were staggered by the scenes that we witnessed, but equally unsurprised by the mettle of the many families and business owners who shared their stories. Queenslanders are an inspirational, resilient bunch and north Queenslanders are as tough as they come. They have rolled up their sleeves and got on with the job. Indeed, they were getting on with it even as the storm was still rolling south; it is as simple as that.

Our thanks and admiration go to those dedicated and fearless military and emergency services personnel, as well as the flying squads of workers, particularly the power and energy workers, who toiled in often dangerous conditions to restore essential services. I acknowledge the tremendous work of the mayors who worked tirelessly and without much sleep over many days: Andrew Willcox, Ann Baker from Isaac shire, Greg Williamson, Luke Smith, Greg Christensen and Margaret Strelow, among others. I also acknowledge the members of my team whose electorates were primarily pummelled in that maelstrom: from Jon Krause at the Scenic Rim and Mark Boothman in Albert to Jason Costigan in the Whitsundays and Dale Last in the Burdekin, as well as Ros Bates in Mudgeeraba, who dealt with the issues up in Springbrook. I know how hard and tirelessly they worked. They spent days away from family, helping their local communities to recover. They are still very much out there, assisting their local communities and ensuring that they are not forgotten.

Tropical Cyclone Debbie was a monster, slow moving and unforgiving. However, Queenslanders stood up to her and, long after she has blown her last breath, it is the extraordinary stories that count. In the Scenic Rim I met an SES worker who was away rescuing others while his own house flooded. Jeff McConnell is one of those blokes who makes you proud to be a Queenslanders. To Jeff and all those Queenslanders who have lost and must now rebuild, I want you to know that we will not forget you. We will not forget you over the weeks and months ahead. As you recover, we will be with you every step of the way.