




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Emergency Service; Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.49 am): It is a real privilege to be the Palaszczuk government's minister who is dedicated solely to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. Before I go any further I want to thank my predecessor, Mark Ryan, for the wonderful work that he did in this very important space. As events of the past few months have made abundantly clear, Queensland is currently experiencing what is called a severe weather season. It will continue all the way through until the end of April.

I have recently travelled to Yam Island, Moranbah and Townsville to inspect storm and flood damage and thank our hardworking QFES personnel for their wonderful efforts. Additional QFES crews were deployed to the affected areas to bolster their response capability, working shoulder to shoulder with local teams to firstly deal with the emergency callouts and then the clean-up.

Without taking away from the tremendous work of everyone involved, I would like to make special mention of our swiftwater rescue crews and our SES flood boat crews. These well-trained and well-prepared specialists have undertaken rescues in unpredictable flash flooding, all too often risking their own lives to respond to people who unfortunately failed to heed the warnings, made poor judgement calls and drove into floodwater.

For the benefit of our hardworking crews, let me once again remind people that it does not matter what kind of car you drive, how experienced you are or how badly you need to get across that road: if it is flooded, forget it. QFES has introduced 11 inflatable motorised swiftwater rescue craft and a further six are expected later this month. These craft will further enhance the ability of our floodwater crews to reach those in trouble. QFES continues to work closely with other agencies, including local governments, to ensure that local personnel are ready to respond to severe weather in Queensland. I have no doubt that I will be travelling again soon, and when I do I am confident that QFES and other agencies will once again impress.

We are drawing on past experience to help guide us into the future. Last year's severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie was a rigorous test which QFES passed with flying colours and continues to build on. The kudos for QFES is not just coming from me. The Inspector-General of Emergency Management's review of the effectiveness of Queensland's disaster management arrangements following Cyclone Debbie showed that QFES responded well. Our efforts also earned praise from Robert Glasser, who heads the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Mr Glasser said, 'The response to Cyclone Debbie truly epitomises the type of action we would like to see everywhere else.' I am proud to say that as the key response agency QFES is fully prepared not only now but into the future.