




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

North Queensland, Floods

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.03 am): Having spent the past week inspecting flood damage in the state's north and north-west, I now have an even greater appreciation of just how resilient Queenslanders really are. I have been speaking with impacted residents, local councils, government agencies, MPs and of course our hardworking Queensland Fire and Emergency Services personnel who helped out during these latest emergencies, stretching from Cairns south to Townsville and out to Mount Isa, Cloncurry, McKinlay and Winton. The overwhelming feedback I have relayed to the Premier is just how grateful everyone is for the prompt and coordinated support during this significant weather event and how it is now overwhelmingly 'business as usual' out there.

The floodwaters have been welcomed in most areas, but it caused many millions of dollars in damage to infrastructure like roads. Unlike the water levels, though, community spirits certainly have not dropped. Locals have expressed their relief about how fast the Queensland government was able to make assistance available to councils through the jointly funded Commonwealth-state NDRRA.

QFES continues to work closely with councils and local disaster management groups during the recovery phase. It is through this relationship that I have been able to update many MPs in this House, including from the opposition, the Katter party and the government whose areas have been affected, about what is been happening in their patch.

I was joined on my flood inspections last week by QFES Commissioner Katarina Carroll. Like me, she is extremely proud of the response from local emergency services including fire and rescue staff, State Emergency Service volunteers, Rural Fire Service volunteers and many Emergency Management officers. The SES alone has responded to more than 560 call-outs for assistance, mainly in the northern region, since 5 March. A large number of those calls were made during the seven days to 12 March and were mainly for sandbagging and flood assistance, particularly around Ingham, Halifax and Innisfail.

On top of the SES calls, QFES crews turned out to more than 50 water related incidents, with our highly trained swiftwater rescue teams carrying out medical emergencies, evacuating and relocating residents and transferring much needed fuel supplies. Additional QFES crews were deployed to the affected areas to bolster the response capability, working shoulder to shoulder with many local teams to firstly deal with the emergency call-outs and then with the clean-up.

I would like to publicly thank our tireless QFES staff and volunteers, many of whom gave up their own time to help flood affected communities across north and north-west Queensland. They worked long hours in wet, muddy and often trying conditions and their efforts in response to this event have been exemplary. Their efforts have also been praised by the five mayors and one deputy mayor I met with last week in the wake of the floods.

Unfortunately this is the season for severe weather, and no doubt I will be travelling again very soon. When I do, I am confident QFES and other agencies will once again impress. QFES, as the key response agency, is fully prepared not only now but also into the future.