



Speech By  
**David Crisafulli**


**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 October 2018

**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL  
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (3.16 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Auditor-General's report titled *Flood resilience of river catchments*. I start by saying that it is an excellent and timely report. We should never take our eye off the ball when it comes to flood resilience and the way we prepare for and deal with disasters. It is a report that outlines that about a third of flooded dwellings in Australia are in Queensland. It speaks of the hundreds of millions of dollars.

What is not in the report though are the things that I saw after the floods of Bundaberg in late January 2013. It does not tell the story of the people who would cry on my shoulder who had lost everything without insurance. It does not tell the story of the young couple in Bargara behind the bowls club who had lost the roof of their home and their watering hole next door. They had lost everything. It does not tell the story of the SES worker who was there cleaning up other people's property when her own was under water. It does not tell the story of a young deputy mayor who put everything on hold for months and months to rebuild his city and find leadership the likes of which I have never seen before. That young deputy mayor is today in this parliament as a fine state member. It does not tell the story of the member for Burnett who was there side by side with his growers who had been so badly impacted with roads torn apart.

It also does not tell the story about why it is so vitally financially important for us to do better in the way that we deal with disasters. After this event we went to the Commonwealth government with what I thought was a lay-down misere of a proposal—a proposal that would see, when infrastructure was rebuilt, that it would not just be rebuilt to the same standard; it would, in fact, be improved and upgraded. We banged heads for a long time. In the end we received what I thought was a modest amount of \$40 million, which the state matched.

Today there are projects that have stood the test of time as a result of that. In the North Burnett area a water treatment pump that had been washed away time and time again and rebuilt in the same location is now out of harm's way. That might not mean much to a boffin in Canberra, but it means a heck of a lot to that community. In the long term it makes so much sense financially as well. Why not take that attitude all the time? It is not the local government that bears the financial cost; it is the state and the federal government. Why not take that a step further when looking at infrastructure in communities? Why not make a decision to make it stronger from the start? Why not spend a little bit more and build flood resilience at the front end? Unfortunately, that is not something that Canberra has understood.

I also wish to speak of the Queensland authority that deals with this, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. It is indeed the right entity to respond to these kinds of crises. It is fair and proper that there is a dedicated authority. It is also fair and proper that that authority leads the rebuilding effort, the recovery effort, the preparation effort and also the disaster mitigation and resilience factors that need to be built in.

In this state there has not been a great appetite for building levees, because whenever you build a levee there will be a winner and a loser. Too often, the smaller number of losers have the greater say. That is why my admiration for people such as the former mayor of Balonne, Donna Stewart, is so very high. When we put up the offer to build levee banks, it was that strong country woman who stood up against the naysayers and said, 'Yes, please.' Some in her community made a lot of noise and said that a lot of things would go wrong, but she delivered it on time and she delivered it on budget. Today that community is protected, as is the little community of Balonne, which is also situated in the Balonne shire, very close to St George.

We need to take flood resilience seriously. The Auditor-General's report takes the first step in putting it on the agenda and we should continue to do all we can.