



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.07 pm): In January 2013, ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald devastated the Bundaberg region. Some 2,400 properties were destroyed or damaged, 7,000 people were evacuated and 600 businesses were damaged. The then LNP government introduced the signature Royalties for the Regions program, which, along with Bundaberg Regional Council, funded the work to develop flood mitigation priorities. It is appropriate to say that the member for Broadwater, who is sitting next to me, was integral in providing a rapid response to what had occurred to the Bundaberg community. I thank the member for Broadwater for his true friendship extended to the Bundaberg region in those difficult times.

The LNP government was fully committed to flood mitigation in Bundaberg, and \$174 million in state and federal funding restored community infrastructure and 18 betterment projects improved flood resilience. In Bundaberg, a community reference group was established to consult widely on flood mitigation options and, in December 2013, made a number of recommendations to the Bundaberg Regional Council.

As a result, the council resolved to move forward with a group of priority projects and, in January 2015, began submissions for funding for design works. Those projects were the Millaquin Bend dredging, providing protection to 436 properties at a cost of \$32 million; the Bundaberg East levee and floodgate, providing protection to 741 properties at \$71 million; the Hinkler Avenue upgrade from Tallon Bridge to the North Hill roundabout, at a cost of \$104 million; the Pine Creek, Givelda and Electra alternative evacuation route, at a cost of \$1 million; and the Goodnight Scrub alternative evacuation route, at a cost of \$5 million to \$10 million.

In 2015 the Palaszczuk government determined that yet another study was needed and established the Bundaberg Flood Protection Study to develop a \$4 million, 10-year plan for flood mitigation. The study came up with 11 flood options, most of them the same as those developed in 2013 under the community reference group, and they included again the Millaquin Bend widening, the Bundaberg East levee, the emergency access, the upper flood plain excavation improvements and also a new and a surprising one to the community, the flood house purchase scheme. These findings took until early 2017 to be presented, four years after the devastation of the floods and three years after these priority projects for flood mitigation were identified and recommended.

In June 2016 the Palaszczuk government promised that there would be 'boots on the ground tomorrow' and the first four mitigation options were launched. It is good that the minister is in the House to remember those wonderful moments two years ago when he was promising boots on the ground. As at January 2018, after \$4 million and yet another review, no infrastructure has been started to protect Bundaberg five years on from the disastrous floods of 2013. In the middle of this year, the Bundaberg East levee remained a proposed project with potential sites and details under consideration. There is

no sign of the proposed northern evacuation routes for the outlying rural areas and the proposed housing buyback scheme seems to be another thought bubble and something that we should be concerned about.

I must ask: is this government serious about protecting the thousands of citizens of Bundaberg and the wider Burnett area or must we suffer through another five years of reviews? Quite frankly, I think the community wants to see action. I think the 10-year strategy is starting to creep up on us very quickly. We cannot sit around for another couple of years talking about what flood mitigation should look like. The community deserves, expects and really wants action and leadership from this Palaszczuk Labor government. I recommend sincerely that they give our community the attention it deserves and get on with the flood mitigation.