




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

MOTION

Natural Disasters

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.34 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion, moved by our Premier, which acknowledges with great sadness the devastation experienced in our great state of Queensland by the recent natural disasters, be that drought, fire, or flood. Much of Queensland has suffered.

I dearly want to speak to many parts of this motion, but time limits me. I want to place on record my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the two young boys who this morning were found submerged in Ross River—the same river that recently devastated my community. Out of this heartbreaking and tragic news, I know that my community will provide love and support to the family.

The rain started on Australia Day during celebrations in my city and continued for nearly two weeks straight, in that time delivering more than a year's rainfall. It left an indelible mark on my city. Sadly, that monsoon rain event rewrote the history books of Townsville and, indeed, for the north-west region in a way that is extremely difficult to articulate unless you were one of the members of those communities that were affected or had witnessed the devastation firsthand.

I acknowledge Mayor Jenny Hill and the leadership team of the LDMG who guided us through. I also acknowledge our caring and compassionate Premier and the many ministers who have been to Townsville and seen the devastation and heard the stories of survival and the efforts of our state's bravest. I have deep admiration for the men and women of the 3rd Brigade of the Australian Defence Force who, on that fateful night of Sunday, 3 February, along with our State Emergency Service, the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' swiftwater crews, the Queensland water and general duties police and many locals, pitched in and helped move thousands of isolated and stranded people, saving lives.

Some days later the water receded, but many suburbs across Townsville have suffered devastation. Some 8,000 homes were inundated, affecting people's personal belongings. Some houses were inundated with water over a metre high. Some people will never return to their homes. Weeks later, the clean-up continues. Last Saturday, I joined Team Rubicon Australia and Volunteering Queensland to help. I encourage anyone who has any spare time in my community to register to help through Volunteering Queensland. There is a huge task ahead of us in cleaning up.