




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

MOTION

Natural Disasters

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (3.10 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion. For the past four months I have woken daily to news and updates about the natural disasters sweeping across Queensland. The 2018 bushfire season hit early and hit hard, with QFES personnel dealing with more than 1,200 fires between November and December last year alone. While the fires were still burning, severe Tropical Cyclone Owen, our zombie cyclone, and Tropical Cyclone Penny were bearing down on Queensland's north. After Owen and Penny ran out of puff and while the fires continued to burn, a monsoon trough parked itself over Townsville and let loose. In less than a fortnight the city surpassed its annual rainfall of 1,143 millimetres.

Our social media feeds, our newspapers and our nightly TV news bulletins were all being bombarded with images and stories of almost unbearable heartbreak. Then came the outback ocean in the north-west—hundreds of kilometres of parched earth that became an inland sea. Regions that had been in drought for seven, eight or nine years were underwater, coupled with the loss of hundreds of thousands of head of cattle—another disaster to test Queenslanders. Then Oma came knocking on our door, putting much of our coastline on alert.

Throughout all these events our front-line emergency services workers and volunteers were there. I cannot thank them enough for providing what is recognised as a world-class effort. Amid the sadness, the devastation and the loss there have been some uplifting stories—stories that renew and reinforce our faith in each other. The Burdekin volunteer marine rescue team delivered much needed medication to stranded patients. The Rural Fire Service's northern region support operational group, along with the Townsville Lions Club, served more than 11,000 meals to staff and volunteers as the floodwaters rose.

You would be hard pressed to find one Queenslanders who has not been affected in some way by the events that have swept across the nation in the past few months. I place on record my thanks to our swiftwater rescue firefighters—nation leading, brave and strong; our auxiliary firefighters, there to protect their local communities; our Rural Fire Service volunteers, who not only dealt with fires but also went to Townsville to help deal with the aftermath of floods; our SES units, which dealt with over 4½ thousand calls for assistance for the Townsville incident alone; our Volunteer Marine Rescue and our coast guard units up and down the coast who, whilst we do not hear a lot about what they did, were there and worked day and night as part of the tinnie army; our councils; our not-for-profits; our state government departments; in particular my commissioner, Commissioner Carroll, and her deputies, Doug Smith, Mark Roche and Mike Wassing; all of the senior staff from QFES; and all of our leaders, both staff and volunteers. It was an amazing effort and an amazing job. I know that they are there to help us out in future events.