




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Weather Events; Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): We all know that fires and floods are a fact of life in Queensland, but that does not make them any easier to deal with. Last week I saw the heartbreak that flooding has caused across North Queensland, but I also saw the hope of ordinary Queenslanders. With my deputy leader and the member for Burdekin, I spent several days visiting flood-hit communities around Townsville. We spent a day in Westbrook Drive in the devastated Townsville suburb of Idalia where we joined the volunteer clean-up crew led by off-duty soldier Matt Anderson. Matt's own home on the street had gone under, but Matt and his wife, Marlene, were not just cleaning up their own place. Together with Army nurses and four blokes from the Burdekin, they were cleaning up three other homes in that street too. We all rolled up our sleeves and got to work carrying ruined furniture from homes, sweeping mud from floors, washing away the stench of the flood.

It was gut-wrenching to go through the belongings of Carol, who was alone because her husband was in hospital recovering from an operation. Her clothes and a lifetime of possessions were being thrown out. With Carol I even went through her treasured photos that all got wet and had to be thrown out. I met with flood victims and Salvation Army volunteers at a Townsville evacuation centre and met small business owners who had been flooded in the devastated town of Giru. There were tears in Idalia and Giru and everywhere else we went, but there was also courage and laughter and lots of love too.

From the bottom of my heart I want to thank every volunteer, every emergency service worker, every council worker, every ADF worker and every neighbour who rallied to help their community. They did not pass the buck when the going got tough. They got stuck in like true Queenslanders and I thank them all, but the disaster is not over. It is still unfolding in the north-west of Queensland, where an area three times the size of Tasmania went under. The loss of cattle, livestock and wildlife is unprecedented. Hundreds of thousands of cattle have perished and livelihoods are being destroyed as we speak. I have spoken to many friends from out that way—Julia Creek, Richmond, Cloncurry, McKinlay. They are all hurting. Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart, please let them know that we know what they are going through and our thoughts are with them and I look forward to visiting that area later this week.

The LNP has led the call for insurance firms to give Townsville flood victims a fair go. Some residences and businesses that paid their premiums have been repaid by nothing more than tricky tactics. Insurance companies must do the right thing for their customers and communities.

While the north and the north-west have been hit by floods, Central Queensland was hit by bushfires in late November and December. More than a million hectares of land were destroyed. Sadly, we believe mismanagement and bureaucracy worsened those fires and this week the LNP will call for a full parliamentary inquiry into the bushfires to ensure that lessons are learnt.

So much else has happened in the last three months since this parliament last sat. When the government cancelled the parliamentary sitting week in December, we knew that RTI documents would soon be released regarding the renaming of the Lady Cilento children's hospital. No wonder the

ministers wanted parliament to be shut down to avoid public scrutiny. Labor's plot to rename the hospital was dubious from day one. It was petty, it was pointless and it was political, but then the work of determined journalists destroyed this government's integrity.

The Palaszczuk government's online poll was revealed to be massively rigged. Of the 23,000 votes to change the name, 18,000 votes came from just 74 IP addresses and those addresses belonged to the Queensland government. This sly and arrogant government has betrayed democracy, but worst of all it has betrayed the Queensland public. We expect to see poll rigging in places like Venezuela, but we do not expect to see it in Queensland. Voters are sometimes cynical about politicians, but they believe in democracy and when they are asked to vote they expect their vote to be fair. The Lady Cilento vote was not fair. It was a fraud. The health minister even admitted that to the Cilento family—that a smear campaign had taken place—and last year the hospital attracted record donations despite claims that the Cilento name was putting off donors. What a joke! In fact, this government is the one that is putting off the donors. Philanthropists Judith and Trevor St Baker have told the board to never call them again and that they will look after children in some other way.

Worst of all, the Palaszczuk government is failing patients. We know Labor has lost control of emergency departments that are the front line to our health system. Ambulance ramping is now the norm and we have seen disgraceful pictures of patients packed into corridors on stretchers. On the Gold Coast nurses are even paying from their own pockets to give elderly patients hot meals. In Redlands a doctor has revealed patients wait days in the ED before being found a bed. The AMAQ says that flaws in the ieMR system are putting patients in danger. The system has blown out by \$256 million and now the CEO of eHealth Queensland has quit. I was not surprised by the resignation of Richard Ashby. The only thing that surprises me is the fact that this health minister still has his job. He should have been booted from that position a long time ago.

Our nurses and our doctors deserve better leadership, and they deserve better protection too. At the PA Hospital the number of assaults on staff—on nurses—has almost doubled under the Palaszczuk government's watch since 2018. Where is the protection for the nurses and the health workers in our health system? It is not only nurses who are being attacked. This summer we learnt about the shocking violence faced by prison guards. We saw police punched in the street and being run over by criminals.

Queenslanders were chilled to the bone when paedophile and rapist Robert John Fardon was let free on our streets unsupervised—released unsupervised into our community. This monster of a man is now living amongst us and I hope to God that no woman and no child ever come to any harm because of this despicable human being and his release. I do not know how the ministers of the Palaszczuk government can sleep at night knowing that this man is free. If Labor had of worked with the LNP, he would still be under strict supervision. Those opposite should be haunted by what Fardon has done and what he might do again, because that is how the victims feel.

Under the Palaszczuk government, violence is increasing and criminal bikie gangs are back in business. What is Labor's latest plan to protect the people of Queensland? One of them is closing Crime Stoppers.

Government members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The members opposite may laugh about the victims of crime, but closing the Crime Stoppers call centre would be an absolute shame—crushing a charity that has helped solve over 25 murderers and brought thousands of offenders to justice. The government will not spend the money on Crime Stoppers, but it will spend it changing the name of Lady Cilento hospital. The Palaszczuk government's priorities are all wrong. They are totally twisted. No wonder the people of Queensland cannot trust—

(Time expired)