



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

**MOTION**

**Natural Disasters**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (3.16 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion. We have seen and heard the heartbreaking images and stories associated with this extreme weather event. I would like to add my support to this House's call for the recognition of the women, men and children in our rural communities who have been affected by recent natural disasters. Today we say to those who have been affected: we grieve with you, we stand with you and we will work with you to help rebuild our communities. I have made that pledge on the ground, in the cabinet room and in this parliament—and so will all members in this House.

During the last sitting week I made my third visit to the regions at the Premier's request. I visited the communities of Winton, Cloncurry and Julia Creek. I was joined by the shadow minister for agriculture, the member for Gympie, and a hand-picked group of senior Public Service officers. These officers came with the skills required to assess the situation and the authority to implement solutions, in conjunction with local leadership. I have had the chance to meet with many of the helicopter pilots who were conducting the fodder drops to livestock. They are now affectionately known as the angels of the sky. I thank the House for its indulgence and the Premier for entrusting me with this task. I acknowledge the spirit of bipartisanship shown by the opposition in joining me on this trip.

Words do not easily convey the reality of what has occurred. What I saw on the ground shocked me, but it also gave me great reassurance of the fundamental decency of ordinary people and the professionalism of our government and industry representatives. These are people who have seen extreme, once-in-a-lifetime events unfold within mere weeks of each other. A long and protracted drought, a focus of national and international outreach, was followed by a monsoonal event. The one constant was the character and fortitude of those people who have been and continue to be affected. Today we recognise that resilience and what support we can provide to assist them.

I pay tribute to the local mayors and leaders for standing up and speaking out for their communities. I pay tribute to the departmental staff, disaster respondents, military personnel and ordinary people who stepped in, in North-West Queensland and further afield. The overwhelming support for Queensland's flood-affected communities continues, with donations to the North Queensland floods appeal reaching more than \$6.7 million in the two weeks since it was launched. The monsoonal and drought events have shown us that even in tragedy there are things to hope for. I draw great inspiration from the people across the state who have one simple desire: to help their fellow persons in a time of need. This is what Queenslanders do.