



Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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MOTION

Natural Disasters

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (3.19 pm): I was in Townsville to view the damage and to spend some time with the member for Hinchinbrook despite the fact that I was already aware of the flooding that was starting to hit the north-west. I want to pay tribute to Jenny Hill, who at the time said, 'I know what you guys are going to go through and our heart's with you.' I thought it was touching to say that the people of Townsville were still thinking of us in their time of trouble and I appreciated that. It was ironic at the time because the mines had passed the hat around out west to give \$1 million to Townsville, yet we were not ready for what was about to hit us.

As the Premier and opposition leader mentioned earlier, 500,000 head of cattle have been lost. Cattle were bogged down for days and could not get to feed. Many people were saying that we should have dropped hay in, but that was very hard and would sometimes do more damage than you would trying to save them. Nothing moved except by air, so I think the helicopter pilots are the heroes of the situation. There were outstanding efforts by those individuals. What kept them going given the mental trauma they suffered with the livestock is something I cannot imagine and probably never will understand. There were three days of no sun, heavy winds and the boggy mud. If fatigue and lack of feed did not kill livestock, the hypothermia wiped out most of the rest, and not just cattle but kangaroos and birds. Everything was wiped out. Quite strangely, kangaroos by their hundreds of thousands were all dead because of the cold winds.

There is no doubt that there is devastation and it has touched everyone. It has been indiscriminate. We cannot say that it only touched the little guys or the big guys; it has hit everyone, from the big companies right down to the likes of Shauna Royes from Julia Creek and Lisa from Town Common trying to get ahead, but they lost about 100 per cent of their herd so it is very difficult. There is an industry problem for them to restructure, and we do not want to forget all of those businesses in town as well that can often get left out of the mix, not forgetting that a lot of those are still carrying customers from the drought who had the inability to try and pay bills. It is very difficult.

With regard to the donations—and I hope this does not sound disrespectful—one of the cattle producers said, 'Mate, I really appreciate your 50 bucks, but take your wife out to dinner because I've got huge problems here that will need a bigger amount to fix.' He did really appreciate the kind gesture. We still welcome donations to come in and I think there is a place for them, but I think that was a good story for him to say, 'I want to make sure you're looking after yourself on the coast. We'll do our best to get through this out here.' There is a long road ahead—a very hard road ahead—in the north-west, as I am sure there is for Townsville and those places affected by bushfires. Those bigger industry issues will need assistance, primarily from the federal government, and a lot of rebuilding—

(Time expired)