




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 27 March 2019

ADJORNMENT

Townsville Electorate, Floods Recovery Assistance

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (7.21 pm): I want to thank all members in advance for their support for the Premier's flood relief event tomorrow night and encourage them all to make sure that they dig deep in their pockets and bring out as much cash as they possibly can because they will be supporting the people in the north who have lost everything. Probably one of the best things they could do is come and visit—come up to Townsville and see the Cowboys play and go across to Magnetic Island and spend some time on the beautiful secluded beaches over there. People should come, bring their families and spend some time in our great part of the world.

Last week I attended a small business recovery centre workshop along with the member for Thuringowa to determine how better-do centres like this support small businesses affected by catastrophic events like our flooding. The feedback was that we are doing well, but obviously there is certainly room for some improvements. The Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority, or QRIDA, has as of midday today approved 161 grants to the value of \$2.5 million across the Townsville region. That is certainly helping some of those businesses get back on their feet. The Palaszczuk government is committed to helping the business community affected by floods get back on its feet as quickly as possible. I must congratulate the Premier for her support post flooding events. She has been in Townsville that many times that I think I am almost ready to put her on the electoral roll.

However, there are still over 1,400 houses that are still deemed to be uninhabitable, forcing families to live in accommodation across our city. In a recent meeting with insurance providers, builders, subcontractors and tradies, we were informed that the recovery time for some of these homes could be as long as 12 to 18 months. Insurance companies also told us that this is the quickest recovery time they have ever experienced, with builders and tradies working exceptionally long days to get people back in their homes. I can attest to that: I hear it all on Sunday morning kicking off at seven o'clock down my street!

We also heard from insurance companies that there will be an avalanche of work for tradies in the coming weeks, especially in the cabinet making industry with approximately \$500,000 of work each week going into the industry. My concern is for the local builders and tradies to ensure that they get every opportunity to rebuild our community. We know that when local workers get contracts for work they keep money in our local community and that keeps our locals employed. We also want our locals being paid at local prices, not predetermined prices set by insurance companies based on southern undercut rates. Panel builders who come into our city and undercut our builders and tradies will create greater problems. After panel builders are gone, any rectification or defect work from repairs has to be done by local tradies who missed out on the original work. We do not want to see these seagulls fly into our city, mess all over the place and fly out, leaving us to clean up the mess. It is also a warning to our local builders and tradies: this is not an opportunity to price gouge your community.