




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Floods, Small Business

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.01 am): The widespread damage from the unprecedented flooding in North Queensland has affected so many communities. They are now working out how to get back on their feet and recover. We want them to come back stronger and better prepared.

I am proud to report that so far we have assisted more than 127 small businesses with grants of almost \$1 million. This month our small business recovery outreach teams visited towns across North-West Queensland to provide that all important face-to-face contact with businesses that could not visit the centre in Townsville, stopping at around 20 towns across the region to share advice on loans, grants and other support available.

It is fantastic to see that QRIDA has increased its staff by 30 per cent so that small businesses can access financial assistance faster and get back up and running quicker. Businesses like Rod Pether Motors overnight had a metre of floodwater through the business, swamping cars and devastating the business. After receiving a recovery grant Rod said that he finally started sleeping at night and the assistance he received was the difference between giving up and going on.

I am proud to say that, in partnership with Townsville City Council, our Skilling Queenslanders for Work trainees have also been working in the community to help the community recover from the devastating floods. Conservation and land management and horticulture trainees have been clearing vegetation and debris from drains, creeks and beach access points.

Another Skilling Queenslanders for Work project, appropriately named Building Pride Building Community, takes on a special significance now. Participants are joining other council teams to assist with removal of damaged household goods after the disaster. Continuing to support skills development and employment opportunities throughout the region will be vital to community recovery.

Since we reinstated this successful initiative in 2015, more than 26,500 Queenslanders have a job or have gone on to further training as a direct result of Skilling Queenslanders for Work. This is an initiative that the LNP again plan to cut in its election costings. This is a program that is helping the Townsville community recover, assisting local businesses and providing more jobs for Queenslanders.