




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Floods, Recovery Assistance

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.46 am): Our thoughts continue to be with the people of North Queensland right now. They have been through the unimaginable. Our front-line staff have worked tirelessly to keep residents safe in the worst moments of the disaster and now in the clean-up. We are reminded that, though the floodwaters may be receding, there are still dangers. My heart goes out to the family and friends of a woman who died in Townsville of melioidosis, a bacterial infection. As of today, there have been 10 confirmed cases of bacterial infections from floodwater. Such infections can be treated with strong antibiotics. People with low immunity, the elderly and young children may be at higher risk.

Queensland Health is encouraging all residents to take precautions to avoid skin infections during the clean-up period by wearing protective clothing like boots and gloves and by washing thoroughly with soap after exposure to muddy water. Queensland Health is conducting targeted media messaging and working closely with GPs and emergency departments to address the risks of disease from floodwaters. The Townsville Hospital and Health Service has been providing extensive public health information to local media and will continue to provide advice to the local community on the risks of contact with floodwaters. All public hospitals are fully open to provide treatment to anyone who feels unwell after contact with floodwaters.

I want to thank our healthcare professionals on the ground in North Queensland for their efforts. As floodwaters rose, along with other Emergency Services, the Queensland Ambulance Service was quick to respond. More than 60 officers were deployed to North Queensland throughout the monsoon event to reinforce local operations. They responded to around 100 flood related incidents, despite cut-off roads, heavy rains and flooding. Our ambos pitched in for rescues, evacuations, support at evacuation centres and the lengthy clean-up and recovery that continues still.

The Townsville Hospital emergency department remained open through the entire weather event to provide acute and urgent care to those who needed it during the floods. Doctors, nurses and paramedics came from around the state to help on the front line in Townsville, including one senior medical officer from Emerald who drove all the way to Charters Towers to support the Charters Towers Hospital. Another senior medical officer, Dr Louise, cancelled her leave to travel back to Townsville early. Another, Dr Manoj, who was due to start his appointment at Charters Towers on Monday, decided to travel there earlier and start early. Vanessa, a clinical nurse from Kowanyama, was trapped in Charters Towers by the weather, so she went to work at the Charters Towers Hospital with the full support of Torres and Cape HHS.

These are just some examples, but there are so many more. To all our first responders, again I say thank you. I know we have the best possible front-line staff taking care of Queenslanders whenever we need it.