




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 9 March 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Weather Event, Community Recovery

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (2.50 pm): I rise to provide an important update to the House on our community's recovery from the severe hailstorms that hit our region on 31 October last year. As many members would be aware, a number of severe storm cells hit the Ipswich and Logan regions, directly impacting the suburbs of Springfield Lakes, Springfield, Rosewood, Greenbank and Boronia Heights. The hailstones from this storm were incredibly large—some 14 centimetres in diameter, described as shot-puts—so big, in fact, that they have been the subject of ongoing research by the University of Queensland.

I have previously spoken in the House about the initial community recovery efforts, including the establishment of a dedicated community recovery centre, support from the department of housing, Tenants Queensland, Energex, as well as our wonderful local businesses and community organisations, and, of course, our emergency services who were incredible during the initial recovery—our hundreds of SES volunteers, QFES, rural fire brigade and the Queensland Police Service, who instigated additional patrols through the affected areas, including bringing in mounted police.

Since the initial storm recovery, our community recovery team has continued to provide ongoing support within our community. In fact, in the three months from November 2020 to 29 January 2021, the Community Recovery Hotline received 1,804 calls, providing assistance and support on disaster specific recovery information, support referrals or financial assistance. Some 180 ready reserves have also been deployed on the ground, providing support to the community. The department of housing has supported our community, with 96 emergency housing assistance requests completed. Its work is continuing.

In the three months reported, the Queensland government has also provided more than \$1.5 million in personal hardship assistance payments. This has included our emergency hardship assistance grants, which are not means-tested and were available to all affected residents for immediate support. For those who were not insured or were underinsured, our government has also provided additional funding through a range of grants such as essential household contents grants, structural assistance grants and essential services safety and reconnection grants. These grants continue to be available and will stay open for two years. I urge anyone who needs this support to contact my office or the Community Recovery Hotline.

The mental health of our community has been tested, particularly for our young children who continue to feel residual trauma and fear from ongoing storm activity. The Queensland government has engaged Lifeline and Uniting Care, and to date these services have provided over 1,200 instances of psychological support to community members.

Immediately following the event, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services completed initial damage assessments of affected homes. To track and monitor reconstruction progress of homes in these areas, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority undertook its first damage assessment and

reconstruction monitoring assessment in February 2021. This involved going door to door and collecting information on the progress of reconstruction to individual properties, including accessibility to water and electricity, structural damage and insurance matters. The results of this first assessment are now available and show that, of the 2,065 assessments, 478 properties have been repaired and 1,297 remain damaged. Of the damaged properties, 704 remain tarped and 341 are uninhabitable. Of those uninhabitable properties, work is underway on 151, which is 44 per cent. In comparison, the QRA has advised that at the same stage following Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie work had commenced on 38 per cent of uninhabitable properties. The QRA will continue to assess the progress of recovery. This is really important, because we need to identify where the greatest need exists and help state agencies provide assistance to the most vulnerable in our community.

One of the most critical issues that continues to affect our community is ongoing concerns with insurance. My office has been supporting many frustrated residents with these issues and directly advocating to the Insurance Council of Australia for further support. They heard our concerns for the community and last week held an insurance forum in Springfield Lakes to address policyholders. I attended this forum and heard directly from our affected residents, many of whom are continuing to live in damaged and sometimes unsafe homes and with ongoing uncertainty due to insurance and building issues. Getting available and competent tradespeople as well as building supplies is an additional issue, particularly given the recent boom in the housing market in Queensland and also COVID concerns. Our government is continuing to work with insurers to address these concerns, and I also know that the Queensland Building and Construction Commission has had compliance officers in the community undertaking checks to ensure that building work is being done properly and to Australian Standards.

I urge anyone in our community who continues to be affected and is not sure who to contact to contact me. Our government, my office and I are here to help to ensure our community can and will recover from this devastating storm.