



Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.16 pm): I too rise to address the motion. In the decades that I have lived in the northern parts of the Moreton Bay Regional Council area and in the hinterland parts of the Sunshine Coast Council, I have not seen a disaster of this scope nor scale. It began with extraordinary rain that started on the Sunshine Coast on the Wednesday that we were all here in parliament. Over the course of the next four days in a lot of the electorate of Glass House more than a metre of rain fell. In Woodford we have reportedly had the largest flood on record—a foot higher than that of 2011.

All roads between Caboolture and the Sunshine Coast were cut off for days. Trust me, as the local member, I know a lot of the back roads. Even they were cut off. Every single road was cut—the Bruce Highway, Steve Irwin Way, Beerburrum Road, the D’Aguilar Highway. Places like my kids’ soccer club went under four times in 10 days. There were landslides on key transport routes like Kilcoy Beerwah Road at Cedarton. We will see a lane closed there for many weeks if not months to come. It culminated nearly eight days later in a microburst that again struck Peachester, Beerwah and Landsborough. That is something that the same communities went through four years ago.

I thank all of the tireless volunteers and emergency crews—particularly in this instance the Energex crews who worked to restore power. I understand there were 37 line breaks in that one microburst. They had power back on in most places in 24 hours. I thank the volunteers—the SES, the rural fire brigades—Transport and Main Roads and their contractors.

I give a huge thank you to Kathleen, Geoff and Maureen from the Australian Red Cross for manning the Woodford evacuation centre. They looked after people like Carly and her family who sadly had their house destroyed; it is uninhabitable. My heart goes out to the Woodford Show Society, the Woodford Warriors Netball Club, the Stanley River Junior Rugby League Club who are having to clean up.

I saw the emotionally spent business owners who, after the last two years, have now had to bear the brunt of this disaster and what that has meant for their businesses. At the same time, I cheer on the Maleny and Montville chambers of commerce—presidents Shiralee Cooper and Spencer Shaw and their administration support Nicole Hilton—for what they are calling ‘Hinterland Healing’. In the midst of all this, they have gathered together 12 midweek stays at accommodation venues throughout my electorate. I am sitting down with the members for Gympie and Nanango and we are going to go and deliver them to those businesses in Gympie, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Tansey and Boobyjan to help those businesses have a break after what they have experienced.

We need to do better and we can do better. My constituents were screaming out for better communication, especially around school closures. It is extraordinary that every time I put up a post with information it was sucked up by the people in my community. We need to get better at that.

We need to understand that recovery is not black and white. Let me give two examples. One is Beausangs Lane at Conondale. This is a gazetted road but it is an unformed road, which means council have not built it or maintained it; the landholders have. It has been washed out now to a point where the landholders simply cannot repair it. Because of the way the funding is structured, council cannot apply for funding, as I understand it, and therefore cannot repair it.

That means that families like the Hungerfords and the Sandersons—my good friends David and Louise Sanderson, who is a PE teacher, and their two kids—are now walking a kilometre from where they can park their car to where they access another car. I have taken this up with Brendan Moon and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. We are looking at ways that we can potentially help them, but that shows that recovery is not black and white. We need to come up with solutions where these kinds of problems are presented.

Equally, there are a number of microbusinesses that do not quite fit under a primary producer or a small producer. One example is Belvedere Farm at Cedarton. They do not quite meet that eligibility. It is a case of trying to work with them and the various recovery authorities that make those payments to see if we can assist them. We are talking about a lovely couple who after the first lot of rain spent \$5,000 repairing their access road only for it to wash out completely two days later. Surely we can find a way to extend a hand to help people such as those.

In the time remaining I plead with the government to sit down with Queensland shows. What our regions need at the moment is to know that they will have their shows coming up. In my case, Maleny, Woodford, Nambour and Caboolture all will be holding shows between now and June. The last thing we want to hear is that those shows have been cancelled. Please, can the government sit down with those organisations—

Ms Leahy: Take the health advice.

Mr POWELL:—take the health advice, give us something to look forward to and bring some smiles back to the faces of my communities.