




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.22 pm): I rise to speak on the motion in relation to the floods in Queensland. There is heartache in Queensland across the communities that have experienced some of the highest floods in 100 years. In places like Gympie the floodwater did not just go over the floor, it went over the roof. It gives a different perspective when businesses are trying to get that floodwater out of their roof insulation. I saw that firsthand in a number of places we visited in Gympie.

The floods have taken away livelihoods, businesses, beloved pets, cars and homes, and sadly many are now homeless. I extend my deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those who have lost loved ones during these natural disasters. I particularly want to mention Merryll Dray, the SES volunteer who lost her life trying to help others in the Lockyer Valley. We owe our deepest gratitude to the brave emergency services workers who put their own lives in danger to assist others during these events.

Small and family businesses were trying to get back on their feet following COVID restrictions and now they have been flooded. They are exhausted physically and financially. Following the floods they face the initial clean-up of the sticky, smelly mud and silt that seems to get into everything. I want to thank the Mud Army 2.0 and the ADF for their mobilisation and work. I saw and talked with a number of ADF personnel in places like Gatton, Esk and Gympie. That clean-up goes on for months. In some cases it will take years to recover. The memories and the fear is always in the back of the minds of people when they have been through these horrific events.

These disasters take a toll on Queenslanders. That is why we have to build back better. It is vitally important that we do not continue to build infrastructure back in the same location to the same standard and expect a different result in the next event. When the LNP was in government the Reconstruction Authority was given more staff and empowered to provide a rapid response to repairs. Local governments were empowered as disaster coordinators in their local areas because they know their local communities best. We have seen the benefit of their work in this disaster. The LNP built levee banks and drainage projects in places like St George, Eulo, Wyandra and Roma. We lifted the water treatment plant out of the flood height in Gayndah. That is just a few of the projects that we did to ensure betterment.

In government we also facilitated land swaps so that those who wanted to move out of the flood zones could do so. They had an option. We did that in places like Charleville and Roma. We made betterment projects and mitigation an absolute priority. I say to the members opposite: don't go blaming others. Get on with the job. Do the work and do the betterment projects. Make betterment and mitigation a priority. Help those who have experienced successive events with a suite of mitigation measures and give these people some options.

Our mayors and councillors and their staff have been working around the clock before, during and after this flood event. Local governments were doing what they do best—disaster management. They were and they still are on the front line working to clean up the streets. This event is stretching

their resources. Our local governments have also experienced frustration with the emergency alert systems in Queensland. Some of the Brisbane City Council's requested messages took up to seven hours to make it out. The Western Downs Regional Council were impacted with a three-hour delay for their alert messages. That is far too late for places like Dalby that have flash flooding. The messaging was too late for many and they were cut off and unable to evacuate their homes, cars and possessions. I saw that firsthand in places like Goodna.

No doubt the Labor government is a bit sensitive about the lack of timely messaging. The Premier's messaging in the lead-up to the crisis was lacking. First we heard the Premier's messaging that there would be no cause for alarm and that this would not be as bad as 2011. This led to thousands of households being taken completely by surprise. Then we saw the overreach that resulted in the messaging around school closures that was a complete shambles.

The reviews need to be comprehensive. They need to consult with the community. The betterment and mitigation projects need be kickstarted. We need to make Queensland the most resilient it can be because we are the most disaster-prone state in Australia.