




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (12.12 pm): I start by acknowledging the impact of the terrible rain and flood event and offer my condolences and deepest sympathies to the families and friends of people who sadly lost their lives. I would particularly like to thank the emergency services personnel and volunteers who responded to the disaster and worked around the clock to keep Queenslanders safe.

The Sunshine Coast, including my electorate of Buderim, experienced significant rainfall and flash flooding over a number of days. Homes and businesses across the Sunshine Coast, particularly in hinterland areas, were inundated by water or cut off by flooded roads. That is why I was disappointed when the Sunshine Coast local government area was excluded from state government disaster grants, unable to apply until I and others called out the Premier on social media. Parts of the Sunshine Coast were added the next day; however, only selected locations were added. A blanket approach would have been more suitable. Members opposite do not like it, but the facts are true. They ignored the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast is an afterthought for this Labor state government. The members for Nicklin and Caloundra were silent. It was LNP state members fighting to get Sunshine Coast included on the emergency hardship grants.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Pause the clock for a second. Members to my right, the member for Buderim has the call.

Mr MICKELBERG: As shadow minister for small and family business, I was also extremely disappointed in the delay for support and recognition of small businesses and their staff who were so impacted. Many businesses lost everything. They lost their life's work, washed away. It will take a long time for some to recover and rebuild what has been lost. Many things cannot be replaced. The businesses that were able to clean up and carry on still lost days of trade. Their staff lost shifts and subsequently a pay cheque. These business owners and their workers were only just starting to find their feet after years of COVID impacts. It has been blow after blow. They deserve to be offered support straight away, but it took almost a week for the Premier to even request a co-funded disaster assistance package from the federal government. It was not requested until 4 March. Why did it take so long when the damage was so clearly evident? Was it because the Treasurer was in Dubai while the south-east was going under?

I would like to address criticisms from sections of the media and the Labor Party about the ADF response to the floods. What about criticisms from the likes of David Koch, who demonstrated his ignorance when he directly criticised ADF personnel on the ground, and criticisms fuelled by people like Labor Senator Murray Watt and supported by members of this House, including the Minister for Transport and Main Roads? I note that the motion acknowledges and thanks members of the ADF for

their support during the flood response and through the recovery, but such words are pretty hollow when we have Labor senators and ministers endorsing and fuelling the misguided views of people like David Koch and Shelley Craft.

To criticise the men and women of the ADF is a disgrace. Our ADF are required to step up because state governments are too frequently incapable of delivering the necessary response required in a disaster. Domestic disaster response is not the primary task for the ADF.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members to my right, your interjections are not being taken.

Mr MICKELBERG: The primary task for the ADF is the defence of Australia. They step up to assist the states because, if they did not, Australians, Queenslanders, would suffer more. But, every single time they step up to perform such tasks, we should acknowledge that it comes at the cost of their primary task of defending Australia. Having worked in Queensland district and local disaster management groups multiple times, in my experience the issues with the timeliness of support from groups such as the ADF are because those managing the disaster response do not make a request for support until the last moment. Then they expect the ADF to be able to deploy instantaneously.

In 2011 I was one of the first ADF members on the ground in Grantham after the devastating floods. Members opposite do not like it. I hear the member for Pumicestone chirping away.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Buderim, pause. Member for Thuringowa, I can see you behind that chair; you are warned. Member for Maryborough, you are warned. Member for Redlands, you are very close.

Mr MICKELBERG: When my soldiers and I rolled out of the gates of Gallipoli Barracks in 2011, no request for support from the ADF had been received from the Labor state government. In anticipation of a need-for-support request, we forward deployed to Amberley expecting a call which eventually did come. My soldiers and I did the tasks that the police, the fireies and the community could not. We crawled through the mud under houses to search for the missing. We cleaned up rotting fridges and dead animals from people's houses. We trudged through mud above our knees for days, searching floodplains and creeks for missing people and, alongside Queensland Water Police, recovered bodies from dams, creeks and houses. My soldiers worked tirelessly in arduous conditions just as soldiers did in the most recent flood.

Perhaps next time those who seek to criticise the ADF in such circumstances—including those opposite—might join our service men and women in the mud to see for themselves the commitment to the people of Queensland and Australia.