




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.23 pm): At the outset I want to express my condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those persons who lost their lives in this event. That extends to the family and friends of Lowood SES volunteer Merryl Dray who tragically lost her life in the line of duty. I also, as shadow minister for emergency services, want to acknowledge the work of all of our emergency services personnel who worked tirelessly throughout this event to keep our communities safe. I know, as a former area director of EMQ, just how many hours those personnel would have been putting in throughout this event, under enormous pressure and stress.

Whilst flooding events may be a regular occurrence in the north of the state, they are not so regular in the south-east. With that comes risk. As in any disaster event, it is only right that there should be a full and transparent inquiry into the event and that needs to include everything. Nothing should be left off the table when examining the response to this event, including the role and actions of the government and its associated agencies. Of course this inquiry should examine mitigation and betterment because that is how we reduce the risk to our communities. If we do not learn from this event, if we do not act on the recommendations and if we do not take heed of the feedback from our community then unfortunately we will be repeating the same mistakes, because there is nothing to say that this event could not happen again next month or next year.

The minister stated earlier today that this was the biggest wet weather event in 130 years. However, we should not become complacent and think that it will not happen again in our lifetime. The minister has talked at length about the role of the SES. If he was fair dinkum he would release the review into the SES which was handed to the minister in July 2020. That review was commissioned for a reason and Queenslanders deserve to know what is contained within that report.

If there is one golden rule when responding to disaster events it is communication. Communication, or messaging, needs to be accurate, it needs to be timely and it needs to be managed in a way that the community can understand. The government, and indeed the personnel responsible for managing the disaster response, have an enormous responsibility. They are literally responsible for people's lives. In times of disaster, the information being disseminated through our disaster coordination centres is crucial. In very simple terms, it can be the difference between life and death.

When your property is being flooded, when you have no power, when your life and that of your family's is at risk, people turn to our disaster responders for advice, assistance and reassurance that if they are calling for help then help will be on its way. They rely on that advice when it comes to evacuations, when it comes to warnings about what to prepare for, and it is imperative that we get that right. Too often we are blaming agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology. Too often I have seen, in reports and debriefs after disaster events, blame being apportioned. We are failing to heed the lessons learned.

If there were mistakes made during this event, and clearly there were mistakes, then we need to learn from those mistakes and ensure the appropriate actions are put in place to mitigate the effects of future flood events in this community. I certainly hope the Premier immediately tables the report by the Inspector General of Emergency Management with a commitment to implement the recommendations contained therein. It is the least we can do for our community and it would go a long way to ensuring we are better prepared for future disaster events. Right now there are people out there who lost their properties in the flood who had no insurance, who could not afford to pay an insurance premium, and one has to ask what happens to those people, to their families. I certainly hope that as Queenslanders we are offering the hand of help and assistance to ensure that those people can once again get a roof over their heads.