




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (4.18 pm): I rise in the House this afternoon to support this motion. It is with heartfelt gratitude that we all acknowledge the sacrifice and the hard work that we have recently seen from our fellow Queenslanders as they once again have risen to the challenge of a natural disaster. This has been a harrowing time for so many families, as we have already heard from many speakers, and I join with my colleagues in extending my condolences to the loved ones of those who have lost their lives as well as those we have heard about today who have lost their homes and their livelihoods.

We have talked a lot about the good performance of our water infrastructure. I want to take the opportunity this afternoon to tell the House about the magnificent team of people behind the flood response. Seqwater's flood operation centre mobilised at 7 am on Wednesday, 23 February to prepare for the potential of an extreme weather event here in South-East Queensland. Over the coming days we saw the forecast change as a very unpredictable event unfolded right in front of us. No matter what happened, our flood engineers were stood up and were ready for whatever eventuated.

It was on the Friday of that week that the flood engineers got to work doing what they do best, with a flood event commencing at Somerset Dam around midday. As conditions worsened on the Friday, the drinking supply in Wivenhoe Dam filled up and Seqwater started utilising the extensive flood storage space. When we say Wivenhoe did its job, we know that Wivenhoe cannot do its job without a team of expert, round-the-clock flood engineers. This was an unpredictable event and these dedicated professionals managed our dams in real time, responding to real conditions to hold back, as we have heard, four Sydney Harbour's worth of water from hitting Brisbane. The work that they did did not stop when the rain stopped. They stayed on the job 24/7 to ensure that water was released in a steady controlled way so that the natural flood peaks of the river were not exacerbated downstream. They did this until Wednesday, 9 March, to make sure that our flood storage capacity was once again ready to go at a moment's notice because this very event showed us how things can change so quickly.

I was lucky enough to be briefed at the flood operations centre and speak with some of our flood engineers. I am so grateful to them for the work that they do, which is often unrecognised or misunderstood. Their expertise kept us safe during this event. I was also honoured to meet some of our other unsung heroes on that day. The crews at Mount Crosby water treatment plant stayed on site in terrible conditions battling mother nature and the extensive flood debris in the water to make sure that South-East Queenslanders had clean, safe drinking water during this time. It was not just at Mount Crosby, the crew at North Pine Water Treatment Plant and the Tugun desalination plant battled the same wild weather around the clock in a vital contribution to not only keep our drinking water flowing but also provide water for people to clean up their properties.

We also had countless Seqwater crews at dams and reservoirs right around the state ensuring that they were operating safely and were reporting back to the flood operations centre, which we know they did so well. I am extremely proud of the work that all of our frontline workers did and I am looking

forward to getting out in the next couple of weeks and thanking them personally for their work and their efforts over the last couple of weeks. There are many unsung heroes of the floods and I only have time today to talk about a few of them. To all of the Queenslanders who pulled together during this event and looked after each other during these trying times, our first responders and those behind the scenes, I sincerely thank you. I commend the motion to the House.