




Speech By
Jason Hunt

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr HUNT** (Caloundra—ALP) (3.49 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Premier. In recent times I, like many members of this House, was stunned to see the relentless and unprecedented rainfall in the south-east corner. Many of our communities were devastated and are still recovering both mentally and physically, and still the cleaning up continues. In my brief tenure, I have learned that there are times as an MP when you do feel slightly helpless, and this was one of those times. I watched with incredible pride as my parliamentary colleagues in Brisbane and Ipswich went out into their communities in the filthiest weather imaginable, leading from the front because they understand, as our Prime Minister has never understood, that in times of crisis a leader must be present, visible and leading from the front.

Although Caloundra was the victim of road closures, property damage, flooding, disruption to schooling and so on, there was more to the story in my community. What did occur in my community was a horrific déjà vu for the residents of Landsborough and Beerwah. Four years after a microcell burst devastated this area in a narrow and highly concentrated corridor, it happened again. In the small hours of the morning, an incredibly violent storm front associated with the ongoing weather hit Beerwah and Landsborough. The hail was so intense that the residents did not hear gigantic fig and eucalypt trees crashing down in their own yards. It was not until the next morning when they ventured out that the full extent of the destruction was apparent.

When I went to visit the residents of Sidney Drive, there were walls of greenery two metres high and dozens of metres long out the front of each house, as the residents tried to cut up and drag the remains of the trees out into the front of their yards. Fortunately, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council was able to process most of the green waste and cart it away.

I spoke to Lisa and Darren, Pete and Kath, Rian and Will, all of whom emerged from their yards covered in mud, exhausted and, if I am honest, a little bewildered. Then there was Chrissy, whose roof was damaged from the hail and who needed a few sandbags to tarp it. Fortunately, I had 30 full sandbags in the tray of my Triton, and I was able to leave 10 with her.

From there I went to visit the Twinnies. For those of you unfamiliar with them, these amazing women operate Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue in Landsborough. It was not that long ago that I was there with the Premier delivering them a very welcomed grant. The Twinnies facility was also flood-affected—cages damaged, inundation damage, trees down and all the usual cleaning up that has to occur after a storm of that type. However, these women never missed a beat in their usual routine. Not a single injured bird was left unattended. In fact, as weather events often do, this one took a toll on the local wildlife, so not only were the Twinnies and their mum, Helen, picking up the pieces after the storm but also their rescue services were being inundated with calls to come and pick up injured birds. Helen, Bridgette and Paula, you are incredible human beings.

I give a huge shout-out to our local SES in Caloundra as well. Working around the clock during the crisis, they also distributed sandbags at an astonishing rate. When I visited, Audrey, Dave and Marita were just coming back from a callout and Loreen put me to work filling sandbags at the distribution point. My assistant electorate officer and I put in a good three hours shovelling sand and suddenly I did not feel as helpless anymore. Our SES are quite simply amazing. Strangely, my assistant electorate officer resigned the next week; I hope the two incidents are not related!

Lastly, I mention the men and women of the North Coast Traffic Control Centre. Early in the morning I visited the centre—and what a workplace that is. These incredibly skilled people, in a large room that resembles nothing short of a NASA control room, were simultaneously monitoring the weather conditions, sections of road, road repairs, critical incidents and traffic cameras, and at one point one of them was guiding a courier carrying transplant organs through the best and quickest non-flooded roads. Talk about a high-pressure job!

As always in these times, I am reminded of the value of our Public Service and feel nothing but scorn for those who devalue our public sector. To all of our first responders I say a very heartfelt thanks. I support this motion in its entirety.