




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Floods, Emergency Services Personnel

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.55 am): The recent extreme weather event that engulfed South-East Queensland impacted lives and property. Many are grieving the loss of loved ones, including our own SES volunteers who lost one of their own. Lowood SES volunteer Merryl Dray lost her life as she was going to the aid of others trapped by floodwaters. I send my deepest condolences to Merryl's family, friends and colleagues. Merryl's selfless giving of her time to her community as an SES volunteer will always be remembered and honoured.

During the emergency, the State Emergency Service responded to more than 13,000 calls for help—help that was sorely needed and greatly appreciated by those impacted by the devastation. While sadly there were lives lost to the floods, there were also many lives saved during that devastating event. The fire and rescue service with its professional emergency staff performed more than 600 swiftwater rescues.

I am advised that one of the more remarkable rescues happened at Nundah. Swiftwater rescue team leader Adam Martin and his crew responded when a car was washed into floodwaters at Nundah. It was dark. Adam and his crew waded through chest-deep floodwaters searching. After nearly half an hour, they had had no luck. Time was ticking by, minute by critical minute. Then a resident on a nearby verandah called out and pointed in the direction of something he had spotted. Adam and his team responded immediately and, as improbable as it might sound, they spotted a light shining through the water. The light was being cast by a mobile phone inside a car completely submerged under floodwaters. Adam and his team dived under the water, smashed open the car's windows and discovered a young woman and a young man inside the submerged vehicle.

Every second counted, and there were only precious moments of oxygen left in the car. Adam and his team pulled the couple out, got them to the surface and then managed to get them through 400 metres of floodwaters to safety. It had been a very close call. The young woman had used her mobile phone, the one the swiftwater rescue team saw shining under the surface, to send her last goodbyes to her loved ones. Fortunately, they were not her last goodbyes. Thanks to the tenacity, spirit, professionalism and dedication of Adam and his swiftwater rescue team, two people are still alive today.

During the south-east's time of emergency, the Rural Fire Service was also there to help, supporting emergency responses, running makeshift evacuation centres and, importantly, helping with the enormous clean-up effort, including conducting washouts of flood impacted properties. The Queensland Police Service was also incredibly busy, with officers on the ground throughout the emergency assisting with swiftwater rescues, evacuating residents, searching for missing persons, conducting marine and waterway rescues and patrols, and establishing and monitoring road closures.

Our collective thanks to all of these courageous Queenslanders who have served our state's police and emergency services and to those working in disaster management, the defence forces and other essential frontline roles for what they have done during the recent emergency.

As the Premier announced, whenever there is a major natural disaster we will call upon the Inspector-General Emergency Management to conduct a review. The Inspector-General Emergency Management will examine the response to the floods and look for any lessons that can be learned or improvements that can be made. The review will examine the timing and effectiveness of emergency alerts and will assess cooperation between all agencies at a local, state and national level. The review team will also assess other issues like measures taken to manage dam operations and to protect life and property. The Inspector-General Emergency Management will be inviting submissions from the public. I understand he also intends to host some public forums.

In conclusion, to all of our essential, frontline and emergency services personnel: thanking you for keeping Queenslanders safe.