




Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (6.10 pm): I rise in support of the Premier's motion to speak of the community spirit in my home electorate of Nicklin during the recent flooding event. My electorate was not as impacted as severely as some other places in our state, however, it was very quick and started in my electorate late Tuesday. Unfortunately the timing could not have been worse. When people were returning home from work the rainfall and darkness combined to lead to the first fatality in this disaster which occurred in Belli Park and I offer my condolences to family and friends, as I do to all Queenslanders who have lost someone in this disaster.

Emergency services, volunteers and community members quickly rallied to assist those who were affected. The communities I represent are Nambour, Yandina, Cooroy, Kenilworth, Mapleton, Woombye, Palmwoods, Cooran, Federal, Black Mountain, Ridgewood, Belli Park, Eerwah Vale, Cooloolabin, Bridges, Kiamba, Kulangoor, Kureelipa, Image Flat, Chevallum, Ilkley, Hunchy, Dulong, Obi Obi, Kidaman Creek, Coolabine and parts of North Arm, Tanawah and Flaxton.

I thank all of our volunteers and emergency services staff for their tireless efforts in ensuring that our communities were protected at this time of need. I recognise that many of them have had a long disaster season, having been deployed to other regions since Christmas. I thank the many residents who directed traffic and provided up-to-date information on community noticeboards. I mention the members of the Palmwoods RFB who stood in waste-deep water to direct traffic safely at the rail underpass. While I can speak about only some in our community, this in no way diminishes the efforts of so many.

I am proud to say that the Queensland spirit is alive and well in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, the Blackall Ranges and the Mary Valley. The town of Kenilworth and surrounds were cut off for multiple days and several homes were inundated by rising waters. Thankfully, emergency services workers and volunteers were on hand to assist residents and business owners to protect their properties. As soon as the water sank low enough, local farmers got on their tractors and went out onto the main road to town to clear debris and the huge pieces of bitumen that had broken loose, enabling access once more. I thank the officer in charge of the Kenilworth Police Station, Senior Constable Pierre Senekal, for showing me some of the worst affected areas in the town and surrounds once access was restored.

One constituent, Summa Lee, kept a journal of her experience in Federal, which I will read without alteration. On 23 February, Summa wrote—

Well yep feeling a little scared now. The creek is not far off coming over the bank near the house. It is the most the creek has ever come up since we moved here. I'm not sure if my car is still there on the other side of the creek. We moved most things to higher ground. Next, I have packed a bag for us to escape up the hill if it gets much worse. Fingers crossed we get a decent break, and the creek goes down just a bit to keep the creek level. Fingers crossed. No sleep for us tonight.

Well, we managed to evacuate myself, our 5 yr. Old, hubby and the dog to higher ground for the night. Stayed in the 4wd no sleep. We could hear the roar of the creek but couldn't see or keep track of how fast it was coming up. The safest thing to do was to just go to higher ground. We are still flooded in now, but the creek has receded at least 15m. Hopefully we don't get any heavier rain tonight.

Once the water was knee deep under the house, we evacuated to the 4wd to wait till daylight. We just could keep track of how high the creek was coming up.

In the community of Palmwoods, the sporting fields quickly filled with water while the new clubhouse—home to the Hinterland Blues AFL Club and Hinterland Hawks Cricket Club, and paid for by the Queensland government's COVID Works for Queensland program, and council and state sporting bodies—managed to stay high and dry after being raised above the Q100 level, because in Queensland we build back better. The Woombye Snakes Football Club's facilities and fields also went under but, thanks to the massive community clean-up effort, I am reliably informed that training was able to resume in a limited capacity. I will be seeking some support for them to have upgraded facilities.

Again I would like to thank all in my electorate of Nicklin for their resilience, their determination to get on with things and their compassion in looking after their neighbours and lending a helping hand wherever required. I can only offer a brief snapshot of events. I understand that there are more stories and many groups and individuals affected. I acknowledge everyone who contributed to our region's collective safety and recovery, including my staff, Jo, Dan and Lachy, who are working hard to get affected residents, businesses and community groups assistance through grant funding. I have seen the flood damage to sporting clubs, community groups, schools, businesses and farms in many parts of our region. I acknowledge the loss of crops, stock and equipment as well. We will work hard together to recover. Finally, again I offer my condolences to the families of the 13 Queenslanders who lost their lives during this tragic event.