




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.15 pm): I rise in response to the motion moved by the Premier about the recent flooding disaster that has affected so much of South-East Queensland. I, too, send my deepest sympathies to those who have lost family members and friends and to those who are now trying to rebuild their lives after their homes and possessions were destroyed. I especially want to record my condolences for the family and friends of Gabrielle Sale, whose car was swept off the road in Bonogin. Rescue workers found her body five days after she went missing.

I note the government's intention to review the tragedy and urge them to reflect on their own conduct during the disaster. There is no doubt that the lack of management and clear communication from those opposite added to the burden borne by Queenslanders as the waters rose. Already anxious, people were confounded by the confusion that emanated from the highest office in the state, and that was contradicted by the Premier's own team. First, she assured people there was no need for concern and predicted the disaster would not be as bad as the floods of 2011. That left thousands of Queenslanders absolutely caught by surprise and on the back foot as the waters rose.

Then parents were caught out with the call on school closures. Were they really shut? Did they really need to scramble to find emergency child care? All this occurred as they were fighting the rising tide in their suburbs. The Premier has a 30-strong media team. One would think that would be enough to get the facts straight. However, it was not enough for the Premier to provide clear communication to the people of this state. The Premier's press conferences must all be examined by the Inspector-General Emergency Management in the review announced yesterday.

The very best of Queensland comes out during emergencies. In my own electorate, there were heartbreaking scenes as waters from local creeks crept up and then inevitably broke their banks. Hundreds of residents were affected, cut off by roads that went under the muddy torrents. One of the worst affected, as always, is the Austinville Causeway. Every time we have significant rain it goes under. This causeway went under 12 months ago and a car was swept away. Fortunately, its occupants were saved. It went under again. Mark my words, someone will die on that causeway.

I have tried; I have badgered, begged and even bellowed at the Main Roads minister to do something about it. I finally secured \$150,000 for a hydrology report into the road so planning could commence to raise the road and protect the lives of my community. I have been told—and I keep being told—it's a 'priority project'. I ask again for Minister Bailey to please fund the necessary raising of the Austinville Causeway before someone dies because this project is too far down the list. As his own Deputy Premier pointed out this morning, the return on mitigation is three to one. More importantly, it is a concrete—pun intended—investment in our community so that in times of disaster they remain connected with services, with help and with each other.

Mudgeeraba residents watched again as Beechmont Road was closed and Gold Coast Springbrook Road was shut, shaking their heads as they know the drill: it rains, the roads close and then for months afterwards they endure the endless repairs as the major thoroughfares are patched up once again. Let me run through the list of roads in my electorate that were closed or went under: Latimers Crossing Road, Advancetown/Gilston; Robina Parkway, Clear Island Waters/Robina; Clagiraba Road, Clagiraba; Highfield Drive, Merrimac/Robina; Berrigans Road, Mudgeeraba; Gunsynd Drive, Mudgeeraba; Hardys Road, Mudgeeraba; Somerset Drive, Mudgeeraba; Nerang Murwillumbah Road, Numinbah Valley; Robina Town Centre Drive, Robina; Scottsdale Drive, Robina; Old Coach Road/Tallebudgera Connection Road, Reedy Creek/Tallebudgera Valley; Nerang Murwillumbah Road, Numinbah Valley; Boowaggan Road, Merrimac; Bonogin Road, Bonogin; Nielsens Road, Carrara; and Brushbox Road, Lower Beechmont.

Sporting clubs like the Robina Raptors, the Redsox and the Hinterland netball team headquarters all bore the brunt of rising floodwaters, but the community rallied. By the Monday after the floods, the mops and buckets were out. Volunteers joined council workers to get the courts and grounds back in order. The LNP has three priorities when it comes to preparation for future flood events: communication, mitigation and betterment. It is vitally important that we do not continue to build infrastructure back in the same locations to the same standard and expect a different result.

When the LNP was last in government, improvement projects were an absolute priority. An \$80 million betterment fund was established, and this needs to be a permanent fixture. When the LNP was in government, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was given more staff and empowered to provide a rapid response during emergencies. Local governments were designated as disaster coordinators in their local area. This demonstrates the LNP's continued commitment to ensuring those who know their local community the best are able to keep people safe during natural disasters. We urge the government to consider our approach so that we do not have a disastrous repeat of the last few weeks.