




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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MOTION

Queensland Floods

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.53 pm): There are so many to thank in our community who, as with our horrific fires just over two years ago, came to everyone's aid with our floods and shone in ways that often leave me speechless through their selflessness. For some, the water came suddenly while residents slept, including into my own home; for others there was time to lift furniture. Many were isolated for days on end, cut off from roads and bridges by in excess of a metre recorded in some of our beautiful countryside. Others were trapped on car and shed roofs and in terrifying rescues were thankfully saved. In some areas it took four days before visitors could be flood boated out to return home. Getting out is replaced with the stress of getting back in to view the damage. The speed at which this happened was shocking. Then there were subsequent rain events after the initial flooding.

As with everywhere else across South-East Queensland, there was heartbreaking loss—from family heirlooms to crops, including our famous Noosa Reds, to stock and cars. We can replace things but we cannot replace lives. Every moment of every day our teams were there, whether online or in person, as soon as they could access precincts—including myself when it was safe to travel the river via tinnie.

Our local disaster management group met morning and afternoon and did a phenomenal job in all realms. Constant updates to the community reassured, as well as assured, what was happening and when. This was vital not only during the emergency but also heading to recovery. How blessed we are in Noosa that we have these incredible teams. Even though there is no time to name people individually because there are so many, they all know who they are.

Yes, we have room for improvement. There was confusion relating to picking up children from schools and school closures. There was need for quicker flood support for our small businesses; provision of assistance to remove flood-affected household goods to landfill; and rapid access to resources to clean up the polystyrene, which was a disaster in our ocean and on our beaches from those pontoons, as well as contamination in our catchments. We also have those impacted by land and road slips who are not considered eligible under the emergency disaster payment. We learn more with each disaster, making us better prepared and even more resilient for future ones.

We now have much to do in Noosa, with severe road damage that will leave impacted residents very little access for months, even for waste removal. Assistance is needed from state and federal governments to our council as we are not equipped to handle this large-scale damage all at once, not to mention the roads impacted by the efforts to address the Traveston train derailment.

We extend our gratitude to all frontliners and first responders who not only saved lives but also assisted in hosing out mud-filled homes amongst the many hundreds of urgencies when the water went down. To our volunteer organisations, the SES, rural fireies and everybody who again went above and beyond, making themselves available for any task, whether filling sandbags, lifting sodden furniture, directing traffic or ensuring all were fed: what would we do without you?

To Noosa council and the staff who often would go through the night without sleep, whether responding to calls or ensuring facilities were ready to act as refuges or evacuation centres: you all rocked. To Minister Ryan and his staff for contacting us to ensure we had everything needed: it was deeply appreciated. I mention residents who rescued others or worked tirelessly assisting their neighbours, friends as well as strangers. The incredible stories of bravery and generosity did not end with the offers of muscles, shovelling, food, beds or transport within our own community; they extended to Gympie and anywhere that asked for assistance, especially for those who lost all. How beautiful you all are. The one thing we did learn is the need for a central portal for all offers to go to as it can be a full-time job in itself responding and connecting needs to those offers.

I mention our state disaster recovery teams, who set up as soon as possible. These pop-ups are invaluable, as wading through what assistance is available when you are exhausted and traumatised—and many are in shock—is essential to recovery. To all other electorates impacted: our thoughts are with you and will continue to be right through your own recoveries. To those who lost a loved one: our deepest, heartfelt sympathies to you and your families. Thank you again to everyone. How proud I am of my electorate, as well as all of Queensland, for who you are and what you do every day.