



Speech By  
**Trevor Watts**


**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

---

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

**MOTION**

**Queensland Floods**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.07 pm): First, I place on the record my sympathies and condolences to the families who lost loved ones in this weather event and the flooding it caused and to those who lost property and are suffering financially and in mental stress at this time. We hear you and we will do all we can to support and help. That brings me to the point that concerns me about all of this. That is, we need to communicate better and more clearly and we need to make sure that we are looking at various mitigation techniques and at what we might be able to do. Obviously, we should build back better. Betterment is something that should definitely be done.

On communication, I have a lot of schools in my electorate—26 to be exact. When the announcement was made that schools in the south-east corner needed to close, it was very confusing. First of all, the government is not sure whether or not Toowoomba is in the south-east corner—that changes depending on the department—so the schools are uncertain as to whether or not they are. Therefore, the schools were uncertain as to whether or not they had to close. They were looking at various elements of social media to try to get that information, and that is not the best source. We can definitely do a better job of communication.

There were certainly some impacts on my community in Toowoomba North. East and West creeks travel through the CBD. Rowes, one of the furniture stores there, was flooded for the second time in just a few short weeks after the hailstorm of a few weeks earlier. My heart goes out to that business. We have done a lot of work since 2011 in flood mitigation. When we were in government we spent a lot of money widening the channel of West Creek and put a new bridge in place at Russell and Victoria streets. The places where East and West creeks cross James Street have been enlarged and widened. A lot of the mitigation that has been done means that our community was not as impacted as it was in 2011. We spent millions of dollars doing that in those short months and years after the 2011 floods. There is a little more work to be done. Stress testing through this event showed that there are opportunities for us to improve it more.

One area where betterment needs to be looked at quite seriously is the Warrego Highway. In 2011 we were completely cut off. We only had one range crossing and it was cut. Both range crossings had impacts this weather event but survived. The Warrego Highway was cut at Forest Hill Fernvale Road at Glenore Grove—Raymonts crossing is what it is called. What people need to understand is that the Warrego is the freight lifeblood of the whole of Western Queensland. If we cannot get through the Warrego we are going to lose food, we are going to lose fuel and we are going to lose the ability for businesses to look after their regular customer base when it comes to the necessities of life.

It is critical that we take a look at that crossing. It is a dangerous crossing. There have been some serious accidents there in the past. I think it is time for us to commit to a serious study looking at putting a flyover over the road and the creek so that when there is an event like this the Warrego Highway—the main artery west and the lifeblood of all those communities to the west, including Toowoomba—is preserved and fuel, food and other necessities of life can be moved through as well as general freight.

It would have the added benefit that those people high and dry on the hill could get down to Brisbane to help and provide support. That could be those in our emergency services—the SES, police and others. I thank them very much for standing out there and getting us through this event. The police were out in the rain stopping traffic because people could not get through this crossing. I ask the government to have a look at this crossing and build back better.