




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

North-West Queensland, Weather Events; Betterment Funding

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.46 pm): I rise to extend my thanks to those emergency volunteers and workers who have helped—and in many cases are still helping—with the flood situation in the Burke shire and other surrounding areas. I want to acknowledge the work of the mayors and councillors in the north-west for their leadership in this event, especially Ernie Camp, the Mayor of the Burke Shire Council. Ernie has had a personal battle with these floods. He was evacuated from his home. He had to travel through crocodile infested waters for 12 kilometres to an area where a helicopter could actually land to evacuate him. In 2019 Ernie said that the effects of that disaster, in 2019, may last for generations—even though they had had a dry flood. His region did not need another wet flood such as this just four years later.

Some of the north-west communities have been cut off since January this year. They are hurting. Hurting most is the community of Burketown. We heard that from LNP leader David Crisafulli earlier. Rural stations and roadhouses are completely underwater. Communities like Urandangi, Doomadgee and Camooweal are also battling against these floods. The rebuild and recovery will be complicated by so many factors. The cost of materials and the accessibility of tradesmen will be a real challenge. Simply getting machinery into the region will be a significant cost. With an already high cost of living, these north-west communities will struggle even more to provide for their families, the people who live there and the small businesses. I urge both state and federal governments and the not-for-profit agencies to not allow these communities and the region to become the forgotten region in the gulf.

This brings me to Australia's first betterment fund, established by the LNP in 2013 by the then minister for local government and community recovery and resilience, David Crisafulli. At the inception of this fund the LNP spent \$80 million on projects around the state. Contrast this to the Labor state government, whose members took to the airwaves last week to talk about the 10 years of betterment funds—talking up a program initiated by the LNP. We learned from the minister's release, commemorating the member for Broadwater's initiative, that this government has not matched the LNP's commitment of \$80 million per year of betterment funding. Sadly, the Labor government has managed on average only \$23 million per year. Councils would do much more if only the Labor government would help them. In the past eight years, the Palaszczuk Labor government has not completed one levee bank and not one detention basin; however, it has spent \$237 million on a white elephant at Wellcamp. It spent nearly as much money on Wellcamp as it spent on betterment over the past 10 years.

It is up to the Queensland government, through the Reconstruction Authority, to drive the delivery of betterment projects across this state. Clearly from the minister's press release we see that they have not been doing this and they have been letting Queenslanders down, particularly those who are flood-prone and disaster-prone.

This Labor government is always slow to act. After the South-East Queensland floods last year the Labor government set up the Resilient Homes Fund. As well as home buybacks, this fund was to raise and retrofit flooded dwellings. Since the establishment of the program in May last year, 5,552 registrations of interest have been received for raising or retrofitting. Home owners then had to have an assessment and on receipt of the assessment and approved scope of works they could proceed to get a quote from contractors.

In December last year 72 applications for funding had been received—56 for refit and 16 for home raising. As at January this year two applications had been approved for works to commence under the home raising program. Seven months after the flood only two home owners have had assistance from this program. At the rate of two per seven months, it will take over 100 years for families who are displaced by flood to receive any funding from this program. It is not good enough that they have to suffer under this government which is slow to act.

The legacy of this Labor government in one of the most disaster-prone states is they cannot drive up betterment funds and they are slow to act on funds from the Resilient Homes Fund when it comes to home raising and retrofitting. Queenslanders deserve better.