




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

North-West Queensland Floods

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.24 pm): Yesterday I met with the Mayor of Burke Shire Council, Ernie Camp; Deputy Mayor, Tonya Murray; the CEO, Dan McKinlay; and Anne Pleash from Mission Consulting Solutions. They are not down here to socialise for the fun of it; they are down here because that shire has its back to the wall. That shire needs help. That shire, as we know all too well, experienced one of the biggest floods on record—floods 10 metres higher than previously recorded, floods that isolated the community of Burketown for months, floods that swept away an estimated 80,000 head of cattle, floods that caused the majority of the Burketown residents to be evacuated by helicopter. That shire covers an area of 40,127 square kilometres and has a resident population of 550 people. What does that mean? When it comes to recovery, it poses huge obstacles, as you would appreciate. That group are down here this week, meeting with the government, meeting with members of the opposition, asking for help. I am pleased to stand here today to say to them that I support them. I support them 100 per cent in their efforts to acquire that assistance.

What do they want? They want to designate the Gulf Savannah Way, which is the highway between Normanton and Borroloola, as 'Highway One', a national highway, which would open up funding streams for that particular council. The majority of the roads in the Burke Shire are local council roads and many of these roads, as you would appreciate, have been completely destroyed as a consequence of these floods.

What do they need? They need \$75 million to raise crossings and raise the bridges at the Nicholson River and Gregory River. We take that sort of infrastructure for granted down here in the south-east of the state, but up there, those roads are the arteries for those communities. Without those roads, they do not have accessibility. Without those roads, they struggle, as we have seen currently with the devastation in the community of Burketown. Those improvements would provide disaster resilience which we know is so important. It would improve the local economy, provide access for not only tourists and local residents but also the graziers in that community.

I know that group is meeting with the Premier this afternoon. I hope the Premier comes with the chequebook because we need money on the table, not empty promises—we need money on the table—to help that community get back on its feet.