




Speech By
David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2023

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

North-West Queensland, Weather Events; Cost of Living

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): I want to use my contribution today to highlight the significant and serious situation that is unfolding in parts of our state's remote area. I refer to areas in the Far North, the north-west and the Gulf Country and the reports of rainfall approaching a metre in the month of March alone. This has resulted in scenes the community believe are unprecedented—damage to homes and businesses, the loss of livestock and reports of riverbanks breaking in places that locals have not seen before. I want this House to know that we are serious about this part of the state and we believe that they are great Queenslanders who need our help. They need our help in spirit, and they will need our help in the weeks and months ahead.

We have seen the isolation of these communities for an extended period of time. In a moment I will recount some of the conversations I have had with the mayors in that local area. Shortly, our shadow minister for disaster recovery, the member for Warrego, will make a contribution about some of her findings in that area. I want Queenslanders to know just how serious the situation is. It could be weeks before evacuated residents can return home. It could be months before roads are open again.

I will relate some of the conversations with and feedback received from mayors. For the mayor of Burke, Ernie Camp, it is very personal because he, like many of his community, is a victim of the flooding. Ernie, along with his family, has been seriously impacted. I know that the community will be rallying behind him personally as he seeks to rebuild his shire. One dark cloud he is dealing with at the moment is the level of vitriol from a small amount of people who are using social media channels during his shire's darkest hour. My message to those people is to cut it out. Now is not the time for people to be engaging in keyboard warfare. Now is the time to bandy together; now is the time to be united and to ask the rest of Queensland to take their problem seriously. Playing one resident off against another and attacking the decision-makers in the community certainly will not achieve that. We want the mayor and his community to know that we stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their hour of need.

I have spoken to the mayor of Doomadgee, Jason Ned. That community has been isolated for some time. I know that the member for Traeger visited there the other day to express his concerns about the lack of access for that community. We share those concerns and we seek to advocate on their behalf.

I want to take the opportunity to explain how much isolation means to these communities and the real impacts on their cost of living through the eyes of the mayor of Carpentaria shire, Jack Bawden. Many of their communities have not reopened since 5 January—that is over two months. The incredible rain they are experiencing now is just the latest blow after two months of isolation. In the mayor's words, this impacts them every day. It impacts their ability to access goods and services, and the cost of freight coming into that community is massive. It severely impacts any ability for them to do well out of tourism. I am talking about places like Karumba and Normanton, which have been cut off since the start of the year. He made the point to me that if this were to happen in a more populated area there would be

truckloads of people there looking to give moral and financial assistance, and he is right. We need to let them know that just because they are remote it does not mean they do not count. To the contrary, they certainly matter.

The mayor's comments about the cost of living come at a time when the issue has never been more important for Queenslanders. In a moment, the deputy leader is going to make a contribution around the blowouts in infrastructure costs, the shambolic nature of what we are seeing unfold when it comes to Olympics infrastructure and the dysfunctionality in what has become a very tired third-term government, but we have to do it through the prism of what that means to Queenslanders and the costs they are experiencing.

In recent weeks and months, the desperation of everyday Queenslanders regarding their cost of living has reached levels the likes of which we have not seen before. Sadly, it is only going to get worse. The level of government that can do most to ease the cost of living for people is the state government. It is the state government that can do the most to make things affordable for Queenslanders. The No. 1 cost that a Queenslanders experiences every day is either the rent they pay or the repayments they make on their house. Housing supply—the delivery of infrastructure, partnerships with council, good planning, unlocking land opportunity, supplying social housing for the least fortunate, partnering with the community housing sector and making sure there is available stock—rests with the state government. When state governments cannot plan and deliver, it creates a feeding frenzy, particularly at the lower end of the market, and everyday Queenslanders pay the price.

Queenslanders want their electricity to be affordable, reliable and sustainable. They want to know that the assets they own are well maintained and can lower costs for them. They want to know that the government is serious about doing what it can.

Today, to see the Premier completely and utterly oblivious about the cost of insurance and what it means to Queenslanders was troubling at best. It is always someone else's fault: 'It's happening somewhere else'; 'It's complex'; 'I'd love to get onto it but I don't have the time'; 'We'll look into it: we'll have an inquiry, an investigation'; 'I'll ask the minister about that'; 'I have to go.' There is always a reason the Premier cannot answer something. Householders do not have that ability. When the bill's due date comes, they are not able to defer it and say, 'Other households have big bills', 'It's a very complex issue, paying these bills' or 'The neighbour ran a lead from my yard to run their hedge trimmer.' They do not have the ability to blame others.

The cost of living is creeping up on people. We have spoken with Queenslanders who a year ago bought a block of land for their dream home but now cannot obtain a loan to build that home. That means they are paying rent where they are, paying repayments on a block of land, paying rates and paying insurance where they are, and they are unable to take the step of building their dream home.

Businesses talk to me about how tough it is at the moment with all of the rising costs. The cherry on the cake is smashed windows, stolen goods or an inability to attract staff because there are no houses. These are issues that Queenslanders are talking about and they are talking about it across the state.

In a moment the shadow health minister will talk about this government's culture when it comes to not wanting to reveal things publicly. What we have seen with the QAS dispatch system and a failure for, firstly, the Premier to be properly briefed about it and, secondly, the minister to confess it shows the culture that is permeating this government, but this government has its priorities warped and increasingly Queenslanders are working that out. The priorities that Queenslanders want to see are an economy where small and family businesses and their staff can get ahead. They want service delivery so that when they pick up the phone an ambo can arrive and they are not stuck at the end of a ramp because of a hospital crisis, poor planning or poor resourcing. They want to know that the police can turn up when they need them, that there are the police that have been promised and that they have the laws to back them up. They want to know that the government values integrity, openness and transparency and they want to know that their cost-of-living pressures matter to the government.

(Time expired)