




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Couran Cove Island Resort

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.06 am): As members will recall, Couran Cove Island Resort on South Stradbroke Island is beset by numerous complex issues and legal disputes between private entities. These include allegations of many millions of dollars in debts owed in relation to body corporate levies and utility service charges. There are multiple proceedings involving Couran Cove currently before the Supreme Court. Now we have seen the privately owned utilities provider take the extraordinary step of cutting off power, water and gas to the residents and owners. As members can appreciate, it would be inappropriate for me as Attorney-General to intervene in court proceedings between private entities; however, like everyone, the government wants to see these issues resolved and utility services restored as a priority.

Directors-general from across agencies have been meeting regularly to consider how the government can assist residents and what long-term solutions are available. We have considered and sought advice on every available option. I know that some members in this House and commercial operators have been calling for the government to somehow appoint an independent manager or administrator while this dispute plays out. Even if we could rush through complex legislative change to achieve that, any manager would simply become another party to the ongoing legal disputes, meaning the parties would be right back where they started. It is not clear to government in whose interest an administrator or manager would be working, potentially resulting in additional legal disputes and challenges. The best thing the government and the Gold Coast City council can do at this time is to continue to support the residents of Couran Cove in any way we can.

We know that there are approximately 360 residential and short-term accommodation premises at Couran Cove. I am advised that there are approximately 40 permanent residents currently living on the island. The government is doing everything we can to assist those residents during this uncertain and distressing time. The department of communities has been on the ground to deliver support for residents, including delivering more than 9,700 litres of water. Since February, the community recovery team and Red Cross have made a number of visits to the island. This has led to 22 housing referrals; eight referrals to financial counselling; one referral to My Aged Care; 20 \$200 grocery vouchers provided by Givit; seven \$100 vouchers for fuel provided by Givit; \$16,000 worth of vouchers for water provided by Givit; 37 sessions of psychological first-aid assistance; and one referral to Givit for financial assistance to relocate. Residents can contact the Couran Cove Recovery Hotline on 1800173349 and can contact Lifeline on 131114.

I want to thank the Minister for Communities and the Deputy Premier for all of the work that their offices and departments have undertaken to assist residents during this time. The government will continue to monitor the situation and provide support to residents as appropriate while we await the outcomes of the current court proceedings.