




Speech By
Hon. Daniel Purdie

MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

North Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. DG PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (9.55 am): North Queensland is emerging from another significant flood. Communities have been shaken, homes and businesses have been inundated and, worst of all, two lives have been lost. However, what has been evident is the stalwart response of North Queenslanders in the face of this adversity. I spent time on the ground with the Premier in the past two weeks to assess the level of damage and offer whatever assistance possible. I cannot praise highly enough the work of SES personnel and volunteers, local police and fire, all of whom have worked tirelessly to help local residents in their hour of need. It was in the most challenging of circumstances that I saw just how dedicated our volunteers and professionals were in the face of insurmountable odds.

I met residents who had been displaced and who had faced isolation, the loss of vital power supplies and the prospect of losing their homes. I visited Reid Park, where hundreds of police and SES volunteers were based and, when they got the chance, were sleeping on the floor. I spoke to police recruits who were due to graduate from the academy but have been deployed to assist in the flood response. A visit to the Townsville Sports Precinct and evacuation centre demonstrated the extent of the community response as local organisations and residents came together to help those in distress.

The Premier and I travelled to Ollera Creek where the Bruce Highway had been washed away and entered Ingham the only way we could—on foot. It was here that I met two Water Police officers who had not been out of their wetsuits in days and had been sleeping on the floor at Ingham police station or in their car, when they got the chance.

The following week, the Premier and I visited Giru, a town that had been flooded twice in two weeks. There I met SES volunteers Peter Gorman and Frank Scarabell. Although their own houses had been impacted, both worked tirelessly to ensure all locals were able to reach safety. In Ayr, I took the opportunity to visit the Ayr police station, where I met two first-year constables who had only been in the job for seven weeks. Both reckoned that Ayr was the best station in the entire state.

The State Police Operations Centre, SPOC, was activated from 30 January, coordinating an extraordinary effort. Beyond locally facilitated deployments, the SPOC organised and deployed 312 staff across impacted areas including 69 to the Far North region, 214 to the Northern region and 29 to the Central region, some at just a few hours notice. This response also marked key firsts for the QPS, with SES and Marine Rescue Queensland, MRQ, now under one umbrella. MRQ played an official role for the first time, with 11 volunteers from South-East Queensland deployed and two vehicles assisting. Additionally, the SES deployed 35 staff and 389 Queensland volunteers, supported by 287 interstate SES volunteers.

What was achieved and continues to be achieved could not have been accomplished without a concerted effort by all concerned. We offer our thanks for their courage, commitment and determination. Record numbers of police were involved in this massive task and we thank them for their significant contribution. Never have we as a state been better prepared to face a natural disaster and more efficient and effective in responding. We are there for the long haul and will continue to support our fellow Queenslanders.