




Speech By
Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Western Queensland, Weather Events

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Premier and Minister for Veterans) (9.36 am): To start 2025, Queenslanders in almost every part of the state have been impacted by severe weather. Monsoonal rain in North and Far North Queensland caused widespread damage. Only weeks later, Tropical Cyclone Alfred impacted large parts of South-East Queensland. Now, as we speak, Queenslanders in the western parts of our state are experiencing widespread flooding, too. Torrential rain has turned large parts of Queensland into an inland sea, isolating communities and damaging property.

I was on the ground last week and the level of devastation is immeasurable. While the rainfall has eased in parts, the disaster is still unfolding as many towns continue to face the threat of flooding. Indeed, right now there is still the threat of rising floodwaters. Entire towns have been submerged as water from different systems travels downstream.

While these communities are small in number they make a mighty contribution to our state, not only economically but also to the social fabric of who we are. Floodwaters have destroyed homes as well as critical infrastructure like sheds, machinery and fences. As the waters recede, the devastation to agriculture and the economic impacts of those losses will flow through these communities.

One of the most devastating impacts will be to livestock, with significant losses to beef, sheep and goats exposed. To give Queenslanders an insight into the scale of the heartbreak, damage assessments have already revealed that over 100,000 head of sheep and cattle have already been lost during this event. That is an incredible amount. This number will rise further and it would already be many times this, if not for efforts to resupply communities with fuel and fodder. These losses will create a massive economic impact, but the social and personal impact to Queenslanders of this event cannot be underestimated.

The first step in the response has been to get people out of harm's way. This has resulted in several communities being evacuated. In towns like Adavale, all 28 residents were safely evacuated to Quilpie, where they are waiting for the floodwaters to recede and for the road to be reconnected to go home and inspect the damage. To give the House an indication of the extent of it, every single home in this proud little community will be impacted—every single home. Roads have been cut off and in many cases, the only way to get anywhere is by air.

I can share today that we have locked in two extra flights to and from Thargomindah to help locals impacted by flooding. The first additional flight will operate on Thursday and there will be another additional flight on the following Thursday. I want to thank the transport minister and the Deputy Premier for their work in securing this outcome. A short while ago I spoke to the local mayor, 'Tractor' Ferguson, who asked me to pass on his thanks and gratitude and that of his community, who are still doing it very tough with waters rising in the community.

One thing we know for sure is that when times are tough Queenslanders step up to help each other. One of the rallying cries from mayors and local communities has been the absence of accurate weather and river height data. They have been flying blind due to a lack of infrastructure for too long. I want to thank federal opposition leader Peter Dutton, who has committed \$10 million towards a new weather radar for the region if elected. We know there is also a real need for more river gauges to give locals better visibility of severe weather in the region, and in large catchments it can help them plan days in advance. For the last decade, regional mayors have been looking to ministers in this House to go in to bat for them in this regard. We are supporting them and we will answer that call.

We are supporting the communities to deliver fuel and fodder. We are working with the Australian Defence Force to establish hubs for fuel and fodder, critical supplies to keep livestock fed. I also want to express my thanks to the private chopper operators who have been delivering fodder in incredible situations. Their help has given hope that where there is dry land we will be able to keep those animals alive. In the long term, we are going to need to lead a big recovery and that starts with the appointment of our state disaster recovery coordinators.

Today I can announce the former mayor of Quilpie shire, Stuart Mackenzie, has been appointed state disaster recovery coordinator to lead the recovery effort in the west. Mr Mackenzie has a decades-long career in local government. He is also a fourth generation grazier and that makes him perfectly placed to understand the challenges that are being experienced on the ground. Stuart will be supported by Chief Superintendent Troy Pukallus, who will serve as the deputy state disaster recovery coordinator for this event. The chief superintendent has spent over 30 years policing including specialist experience as the state coordinator for the Rural and Stock Crime Squad.

Disaster impacts vary from community to community and, given this flood event has impacted such a large area of our state, it is important we have support on the ground to lead the recovery. However, our commitment is to help every Queenslanders through recovery and that commitment remains the same in the north and the south. We know the work is far from over, and we will be there to help communities pick up the pieces.