



Speech By
Sean Dillon

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Gregory Electorate, Weather Events

 **Mr DILLON** (Gregory—LNP) (2.53 pm): I rise to inform not only the House but also the people of Queensland about the significant weather event that is unfolding in the western part of my electorate—the western and south-western part of the state of Queensland. This weather event is essentially bordered by Mount Isa to the north, the Barkly Tableland and Alice Springs across the border into the Northern Territory. Properties that are being affected in Queensland include some signature places that will be familiar to a lot of members—Glenormiston, Linda Downs and Marion Downs. In the coming weeks, properties such as Glengyle and others in the far south-west will also be substantially affected. Communities are cut off by creeks such as the Mulligan, the Pituri Creek, the Georgina River, Hamilton Channels and, ultimately, all of this forms substantial parts of Eyre Creek. The communities that we see isolated now—and that will continue to remain isolated—include Bedourie and Birdsville; Boulia will have some access restored today and it will recover substantially in coming weeks.

In some cases we have seen properties receive over 700 millimetres of rain in very short periods of time, with the community of Birdsville receiving its annual rainfall in one 24-hour period. This gives rise to a different event a la the 1974 references which will see the entirety of the channel system isolated for eight to 10 weeks, rather than on a rolling effect as has previously been the case.

On behalf of my constituents I would like to extend our gratitude to Minister Perrett and the Department of Primary Industries for their very swift activation of assistance for fodder support for livestock in that region should that be required, as well as to the police minister and his staff for ensuring not only road safety but also the critical air resupply of communities from Boulia to Bedourie. This event happened so quickly that some people in those communities were not able to ensure groceries were in place in advance.

This is the second event in this region in 11 months. It has highlighted a massive blind spot in the federal government's capacity to accurately reflect weather conditions on the ground—whether it be with rain radar, with rainfall recording stations or with river height gauges that can send timely advance notice to people downstream and ensure in advance that resupply can happen. We will continue to respectfully advocate—very forcefully but respectfully—to the federal government to ensure timely installation before another wet season. This one still has six weeks to run—or more in places, with March the pre-eminent season for continued rainfall across this region. Just because they are a long way from Canberra does not mean that the constituents of places like Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia are out of sight and out of mind. The Bureau of Meteorology may not place the same importance on delivering them the timely information they provide to people in Sydney or Melbourne, but this government will be resolute in asking for—in fact, demanding—better support from the Bureau of Meteorology for the farmers, for the people who live in these communities and for people who are travelling—whether they be truck drivers or tourists—to ensure we can prevent them from being isolated and to support those people who are isolated.

I highly commend the work of the Diamantina and Boulia shire council mayors and their staff. Mayor Francis Murray and Mayor Rick Britton have done fantastic work to ensure their communities are safe. They have communicated with the Premier and others to ensure we can be on the ground with the necessary support. I would like to single out Kev Barr, who has had the shortest retirement in the history of work supervisors in local government. I think he finished last week and he was called back into action to address the gaps in the Bedourie levee bank. They are not gaps through lack of maintenance; they are the road access into and out of the community. They are also the primary access to the town's golf course. I extend a big thanks to Kev Barr. That community's safety will be better placed as a result of his renewed efforts with the team. It will be approximately four or five days until the water begins to peak at Bedourie. We will keep a watching brief on that work.

I would like to call out and thank the police resources and the LifeFlight helicopter based in Mount Isa for the terrific work, night-time rescue or evacuation of Tobermorey Station in our neighbouring constituency of the Northern Territory. A number of people were evacuated there as there was a levee at imminent risk of failure. We all know that these rescues are not simple, but there is an added degree of complexity when they are undertaken at night. We are all in a much better place for having people of this quality in our region.