




Speech By  
**Alex Douglas**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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### **NATURAL DISASTER EVENTS OF 2013; INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—Ind) (3.10 am): Recent floods and storms caused major damage in my electorate of Gaven, and one has to ask the question: how much suffering does one have to endure before being eligible for personal hardship grants provided by the state government? Whilst the suffering is nowhere near the enormity of what has happened in Bundaberg, Laidley and Gayndah, people have nevertheless suffered hardship throughout the state.

Residents in my electorate living in Guanaba recently lost two freezers full of food—that is all they had—as they were without power for nearly four days. They were isolated as their roads were blocked. They were without their landline and they had no other connection to anybody else. Power went out at 6 pm on 27 January until 30 January. Members can see they were severely disadvantaged. However, one of the residents told me they were told they were ineligible for assistance because they were not, in the words of the officer, 'starving'. They approached me as their local member.

I contacted the Minister for Communities to see whether I could get them some assistance. However, once again the department contacted them and said they were ineligible because they were not suffering. My constituents say they have been discriminated against. According to the minister's media release of 29 January headed 'Assistance for flooded Gold Coast and Logan area residents' personal hardship grants were being offered for the replacement or repair of contents damaged by the storm. In their case they lost food from their freezers and fridge due to the extended power outage and they kept a list. Unfortunately, whilst they did suffer severe hardship they were told they were not entitled to anything because they did not suffer damage to essential household contents or have contents lost or destroyed.

Whilst on the subject of floods it is often said that disasters bring out the best in people. My staff are constantly amazed by the community's generosity to the flood appeal. It ran in conjunction with the Undies for Bundy appeal. We sent two further loads off recently and we have a small load to go.

On International Women's Day I would like to thank Vicki Va'a, the coordinator of the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre, for the work that she does. She has been nominated as the Gaven electorate's inspirational woman for the International Women's Day awards which Madam Speaker is hosting this morning. Vicki not only raised the profile of the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre when she became its coordinator through her invaluable networking and strong peer group communication skills but is also a strong advocate for New Zealand Pacific Islanders living in South-East Queensland—largely non-permanent residents. We are indebted to Vicki for her skills. She is a wonderful networker and a great advocate of social justice information. I thank her for raising another \$22,000 for the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre