Speech By

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Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2013

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Natural Disasters, Preparedness

Mr PUCCI (Logan—LNP) (11.55 am): Today I rise to speak on a topic that is vital for every community across Queensland. From the hinterland to the tablelands, Queensland's vast geography encompasses some of the most serene yet harsh terrain known to man. Atypical of the unique nature of the Australian landscape, Queensland communities are often afflicted with devastating natural disasters. Just over two years ago, South-East Queensland and regional areas such as Bundaberg were overwhelmingly inundated as rising water levels flooded towns and cities. Each time we face natural disasters, the effect will change. As dynamic as these events are, it is in our power to appropriately and adequately prepare for any eventuality. We cannot control the event, but we are in control of how we handle the situation.

In January of this year, areas in the south-east that were isolated saw how crucial prior preparation is to the survivability and sustainability of a community during a disaster. This week marks the inaugural Get Ready Week. During this week, both the state government and local councils will come together to assist residents develop a greater awareness of the rigours when dealing with natural disasters. Queenslanders continually battle against the environment and our resolve is always tested, but our resilience always shines through. To continue this, it is essential that we prepare ourselves. Procrastination is not the answer. The old military adage 'let no man's ghost return to say his training let him down' can be applied here. We cannot let Queenslanders say, 'If only we had prepared.'

During the January 2013 flooding disaster, once again my electorate of Logan, like so many across Queensland, was faced with challenging times. It was only through community cohesion and the true-blue Aussie spirit that our community was able to pick itself up so quickly. However, communities change every day. We say goodbye to some and welcome others. Whether they are moving up the road or are new Australians settling in our country for the first time, I know from personal experience that learning about what natural challenges we face and how to prepare our households can be quite daunting. Get Ready encourages the community to work together. Once again it unifies us as we prepare for what might lie ahead. I encourage all residents to work with their neighbours and local councils to ensure we are all best placed to deal with any situation.

Our preparation in times of emergency will relieve the burden that our emergency services face. Being prepared and knowing how to manage situations reduces the reliance on emergency services, allowing them to tend to the most urgent of calls. The campaign carries this message: if you do a little, we all accomplish a lot. It is vital that all Queenslanders prepare properly for all natural disasters to minimise their effects and to ensure they can get their lives back to normal as quickly as possible after a disaster. The campaign encourages you to know our local risk and how a disaster can

affect your suburb and your life. Have a plan to deal with, prepare for and take action to be more self-reliant after an event. This will allow disaster management authorities to focus on the most vulnerable Queenslanders. Work with family, friends, neighbours and your local networks to help each other through extreme events.

I am proud that our government has allocated $2 million for local councils to hold community events promoting the Get Ready message. I encourage everyone to get involved in making Queensland Australia's most resilient state. People should check the website—www.disaster.qld.gov.au\getready. I also commend our Rural Fire Service volunteers and all those who keep us safe and put themselves in harm's way. That is why I am wearing a yellow ribbon today. I say to everybody: together we can make it happen.