




Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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QUEENSLAND RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (7.54 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority Bill 2011. The LNP is not opposing this bill as we need to move quickly to restore and rebuild Queensland. We continue to approach the flood and cyclone recovery process with the bipartisan spirit of what is best for Queenslanders. We continue to put Queensland first. The purpose of the legislation is to establish a single entity to oversee, coordinate and intervene in the reconstruction of flood affected areas impacted by the 2010-11 floods and Cyclone Yasi. This includes implementation of flood mitigation recommendations, infrastructure reconstruction and social, economic and environmental recovery in the communities.

Before going any further with specific comment on the bill—and, as I said, I plan to make only a short contribution in that regard—I want to take this opportunity to pay my respects and express my condolences and sympathies to all who have suffered during Queensland's summer flood and cyclone events. In particular my thoughts and prayers go to those who lost loved ones and who are trying to rebuild their lives. Many people lost homes, property and personal possessions. Some were uninsured and many more were underinsured. It has been a time of anguish and suffering. Having lived in North Queensland for 13 years, I know firsthand what it is like to have a cyclone bearing down on you. I empathise with those who sat in their homes and waited out the cyclonic winds, not knowing for sure what would happen. It is a truly frightening thing for many people.

The speeches made by members of parliament of all political persuasions during debate of the condolence motion were heartfelt and moving. I was happy to step back so that other LNP members from flood and cyclone affected areas could use the time allotted to me to talk about the greater pain their constituents have suffered. While I did not speak to the motion at the time as Cleveland and the Redlands were not directly affected by the flood, I now pay my respects at this first available moment. I also commend the member for Redlands for his condolence speech as the shadow minister for flood recovery and, further, I echo the heartfelt sentiments of the Leader of the Opposition in his most presidential condolence speech.

As I have said, the Redlands, as a region of greater Brisbane, was not directly affected by the flooding of the Brisbane River. We are most fortunate that the Redlands was far removed from the destruction that followed when a large volume of floodwater was suddenly released from Wivenhoe Dam. I am extremely proud of every Redlander who stood alongside their Brisbane, Ipswich, South-West Queensland and Central Queensland neighbours in their hour of need, whether as emergency service personnel or as volunteers in the mud army, by providing machinery, monetary donations or donated goods or by helping in other ways. I know that the Redlands will continue to do these vital things when called upon in the reconstruction stage. We witnessed a true case of loving thy neighbour as thyself.

The response of the Redlands community to flood affected areas of southern and Central Queensland was nothing short of amazing. I want to commend my parliamentary colleagues in the Redlands, Peter Dowling and Michael Choi, for their partnership with me in coordinating the relief effort in the Redlands. I was probably the least of the three. Tonnes of goods were donated, collected in a warehouse and trucked to flood affected areas of Brisbane, Ipswich and South-West Queensland. I want to

acknowledge Susie Masters, Stephanie Pearce, Terri Davidson and the team of more than 1,000 volunteers who gave their time over a 10-day period to do their bit for fellow Queenslanders.

I want to acknowledge those businesses from Cleveland that donated their time, machinery and expertise to the flood response and relief effort. I also want to acknowledge the critical role that Unimin, the sandmining company of North Stradbroke Island, played in providing huge loads of sand for the house-saving sandbags. This community minded and socially responsible sandmining company, which has been unfortunately greatly maligned by this government, came to the rescue of many Queenslanders by providing the key ingredient of the sandbags. I wonder how many houses and other buildings and properties were saved from flood damage because of Unimin's generosity. I thank it on behalf of the people of Brisbane, and I call on the Premier to publicly acknowledge the role that the sandmining company played in saving Brisbane homes.

When it comes to the rebuilding and reconstruction of Queensland, we need all of our big businesses to do their bit. So I call on the Premier to quit her petty attacks on the mining company and to treat them as they truly are: the helpful Queenslanders who did their bit in the floods.

While the Redlands was not directly affected by the floods, the tentacles of the floods reached into the lives of many Redlanders who had family members and friends, homes and businesses in flood affected areas. Many of my constituents, while grateful that they did not lose loved ones, have lost much and it will take a long time for some of them to recover and rebuild their lives and livelihoods too.

Having made clear the goodwill of the opposition in the coming reconstruction stage, it would be remiss of us as the opposition to give the government a blank cheque on the reconstruction. This government has a long history of promising much and delivering little. Queensland is littered with the debris of Labor's good intentions, overpromising and underdelivering. The lost AAA credit rating, the Queensland Health payroll fiasco, the Traveston Dam, the dysfunctional Tugun desalination plant, the sell-off and sell-out of Queensland Rail, regular budget overruns and costs blow-outs are just a few examples of Labor's failures and mismanagement. Based on their record of failing Queensland, when it comes to the detail and to the actual delivery of infrastructure and services, the eyes of the opposition are watchful to ensure that the reconstruction occurs effectively and timely. We will not turn a blind eye to government incompetence as it emerges, because we care for Queenslanders.

Examples of potential areas of concern in the reconstruction process include things like the government's lack of a separate minister for reconstruction, the length of time it will take for the commission of inquiry to make its recommendations and the potential conflict with local councils should the government not properly consult and consider local council advice. The skills shortage, particularly in trades, is another area of concern and it will be a challenge to keep the reconstruction on track due to a lack of availability of tradies. As shadow parliamentary secretary for apprenticeships and trade training, I look forward to contributing in a way that speeds up the factory line so that we have the carpenters, plumbers, electricians and other tradies who will be needed over the next few years. It is disappointing that this government has not kept pace even with the current demand for tradies. They are already in short supply and it speaks of a planning failure by the government prior to the flood and cyclone events. We are not in a strong position with the labour that will be required. Queensland needs rebuilding and I have major concerns that this government is up to the challenge.