

Thursday 1 August 2019, House of Representatives Question Time

Queensland: Floods

Mr ENTSCHE (Leichhardt) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management. Will the minister please explain to the House how the Morrison government is on the side

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (15:08): Can I thank the member for Leichhardt for his question and his leadership during that trying period. The sheer scale of that event was unimaginable. I was given the opportunity to see it firsthand as it unravelled. It's something I've never seen before, and I hope I never see it again. I know the Prime Minister also made himself available to be there as this unravelled and then revisited after being re-elected, because this is something that has really touched over 100,000 Australians. We lost half a million livestock in this event. It's one of those events that we as a nation can take some solace out of—that when these events do happen, we come together and we work collectively together. This government, along with the Queensland government, announced a \$242 million recovery package. We made sure we were able to get boots on the ground as quickly as we could, because we work collectively together. That was around putting a disaster allowance into households that were impacted, \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child, to help in the clean-up. We also made sure that we understood the unique nature of this event on the agricultural sector. We tasked Shane Stone with heading the recovery task, and I think this parliament and this nation owes him a debt of thanks for what he is doing and continues to do. What we didn't want was a Canberra solution; we wanted a local solution. We wanted people on the ground listening, kitchen table to kitchen table, and understanding farmers' needs. Proudly, we acted swiftly in terms of the disaster rebates, lifting them from \$25,000 to \$75,000 with the stroke of a pen straightaway. We understood the magnitude of this event on those farmers. We also lifted it for small businesses, because they have also been impacted by this. We've lifted that to \$50,000. I announced today that I have extended the period for application for that program out till November. We do not want anyone to self-assess, but we do not want anyone left behind. I encourage those that were impacted by this flood to reach out and to actually ask: are you eligible? It's important that we help you recover. Therefore, the state government and the federal government are going to extend it out to November. We've also made sure that we've, for the first time, given one of the largest grant programs to primary producers—a \$400,000 grant program for restocking and replanting. They lost their income in one event. This is about giving them a leg-up to restart and to rebuild, and to rebuild their communities. We will also work with the Regional Investment Corporation to undertake agri-rebuild loans—\$5 million to eligible farmers at concessional rates to help them reconstruct, to rebuild their businesses and to rebuild their families. This was a major event that we will not forget. Those Queenslanders are not forgotten, and this government will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with them