

go out and spend more money when these buildings are already there and have withstood the cyclone. I know from Project Services that those buildings were in fact overdesigned. I was advised last week in Cairns that they were designed to the highest possible standards in that regard. So they have withstood the venom of that cyclone, and one could easily argue, I think, that it would be quite wise at this stage to appraise that set of circumstances.

I was at Silkwood the other day and I observed that the building that had blown away there was one that was funded by the federal government directly to the school. It was not one that was built by the state government and it was not built under our plans. But every other building that I saw had that capacity. Ironically, the Tully State School—the primary school which the honourable member attended—has a brick building that was built in the 1930s and, in my view, would serve very well as an evacuation centre. My personal opinion of the evacuation centre used in Cairns, the Earlville Shopping Centre, is that it was a very informed decision to make, and I think we ought to be concentrating our efforts down that path as well and looking at whether or not there needs to be some subsidy from the public sector to go into that to create an evacuation centre.

My quick answer is that the policy that was announced was revisited. There was a desire then to have it as part of the built environment, the normal construction, as Education Queensland did, as one example. I think we really need now to revisit this whole question in terms of whether we want to squander money on evacuation centres that will ultimately not be required.

### South-East Queensland Floods, Water Security

**Mrs SMITH:** My question is to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. Will the minister outline to the House how the Bligh government's water reforms helped guarantee water security during South-East Queensland's floods?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I thank the member for the question. I have stood in this place now on numerous occasions to explain the benefits of South-East Queensland's new water grid, not just in terms of ensuring that South-East Queensland is drought proof but also in terms of ensuring that there are additional benefits when it comes to challenging times such as we have seen over the last months with those devastating floods in January. Quite simply, the impact of those floods on particularly the Mount Crosby water treatment works meant that a critical part of South-East Queensland's water grid—the desalination plant at Tugun on the Gold Coast—came into its own in terms of ensuring quality water supplies to the people of South-East Queensland.

At the height of the floods, some 10 tonnes per second of silt and debris were flowing past the treatment plants at Mount Crosby downstream from Wivenhoe Dam. That meant very challenging times for Seqwater workers at that treatment plant, and I will come back to them in a moment. What it meant was that, at the most critical time, as a result of the desalination plant quality water supplies were able to continue, much to the amazement of interstate water authorities who have since contacted Seqwater to find out how they achieved that. Had we not had that desalination plant, then the whole of Brisbane, Logan, Redcliffe, Redlands, Ipswich, up to the Sunshine Coast and northern parts of the Gold Coast would have been boiling their water for days on end as a result of not being able to maintain water quality. It was as a result of being able to fire up that desalination plant that we were able to maintain water quality and not have the third largest city in Australia having to boil water.

One of the untold stories of this flood is the magnificent work that those workers at Mount Crosby performed in order to maintain some level of throughput. They had lost power. They were working in vertical tunnels of 40 metres, in pitch dark with torches in their mouths, in order to keep switching on and off pumps to maintain some level of treatment coming out of that Mount Crosby plant. They were being flown in by helicopter to change shifts after 12 hours. And I have to say that they were working in the most hazardous of circumstances. It is a story that will be told in far more detail at an appropriate time, but I take this opportunity to place on record my absolute respect and thanks for those workers at Mount Crosby for their bravery and commitment to their posts. They are some of the unsung heroes to date of what happened during those devastating events.

### Natural Disasters, Recovery Assistance

**Mr RICKUSS:** My question is to the Premier. Many constituents in my electorate who have been badly affected by storm damage do not qualify for state grants because of the current means test levels. Will the Premier put the people first and please urgently reconsider the means test levels so that these victims can access this much needed money and get on with rebuilding their lives?

**Ms BLIGH:** I thank the honourable member for the question. The member might have heard in my earlier comments about the Premier's relief fund an acknowledgement that some people, because of their circumstances, do not qualify for other forms of assistance and that is why these sorts of relief funds are so important. The means test that applies to state government assistance is the same means test that applies in every state of Australia and is indexed every year. Therefore, it is the same one that