

NICK DAMETTO

Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

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Flood recovery needs full government focus: Dametto

HINCHINBROOK MP Nick Dametto has urged the State Government to throw its full weight behind North Queensland's mammoth flood recovery effort by suspending this sitting week of parliament.

In an extraordinary move, Mr Dametto said now was not the time to be "playing politics in Brisbane" while thousands of North Queenslanders were left to count the cost of flood damage and rebuild their lives.

"Our region is hurting. Our people are hurting. I call on the Premier and her ministers to use this catastrophic event as a chance to back North Queensland 100 per cent. Our time this week is needed on the ground and would be far better spent in our region assisting those leading the clean up effort rather than taking potshots at political opponents in parliament," he said.

"We need those government departments involved in the flood recovery phase to be firing on all cylinders. Schools still need to be reopened and roads and vital transport infrastructure needs to be restored to bring normality back to our city. That will require leadership from the top."

Mr Dametto will today send letters to Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Opposition leader Deb Frecklington and Attorney-General and Leader of the House Yvette D'Ath requesting this sitting week of parliament be suspended.

Suburbs of Mr Dametto's electorate including Bluewater, Bushland Beach, Saunders Beach and Toolakea were among the first to be hit by flooding late last month.

"The devastation and heartache I have witnessed on the ground has been hard to fathom, it's difficult to put it into words. Some people have lost absolutely everything while others will be up for thousands of dollars in repairs," the Katter's Australian Party MP said.

"I accept what I am calling for is a somewhat radical proposal and the Premier may not be willing to fully suspend parliament. But we are dealing with a humanitarian crisis right here in Townsville at the moment.

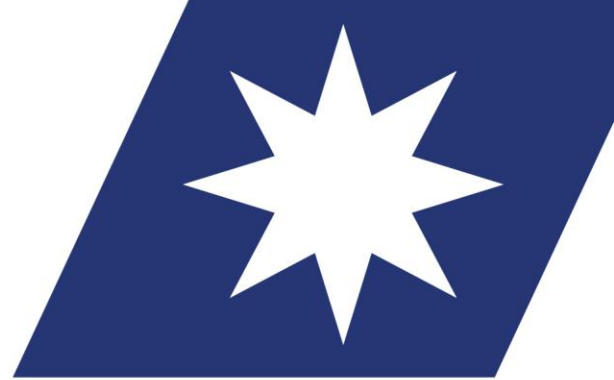
"The process of parliament is very important and in my opinion, when parliament is in session you need to be focused on that solely. I just can't see how government ministers and MPs playing their part to coordinate this recovery could possibly do both effectively.

"I've been in conversation with people who are casual employees who are unable to work because their place of work has been destroyed and their homes have been found to be uninhabitable because of water damage. They are sleeping in their cars because of a public housing and rental shortage. We are on the cusp of a second wave of disaster.

"At the very least I'm asking for those MPs whose electorates who have been impacted by flooding to be able to take a leave of absence from parliament so they can remain on the ground if they deem it necessary to assist their constituents."

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A Queensland Member of Parliament who is not able to attend a voting division is able to enter into an agreement with another MP known as a “pairing”. This allows an MP to arrange for another MP intending to vote the opposite way to be absent, therefore reducing the votes for both the ‘ayes’ and ‘noes’.

Mr Dametto praised emergency services, Australian Defence Force personnel, community members, Townsville City Council and the countless amount of volunteers and charity groups for their “courageous efforts” in helping flood victims over the past few weeks.

But he added recent commentary in the media about the management of Ross River Dam was “incredibly unhelpful”.

“Personally, I found it insulting that some Members of Parliament have been trying to use this horrific natural disaster for political opportunism instead of doing everything they can to support flood victims,” he said.

“I won’t be getting sucked in to some petty blame game and instead will be focusing my efforts on helping my constituents get back on their feet, as will all KAP MPs. We’re all in this together.”

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