



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Media Release

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### Windsor calls again for a National Natural Disaster Fund

The establishment of a National Natural Disaster Fund has again been called for by the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor has raised the proposal during his speech to the Parliament on the Condolence Motion to victims of the Victorian Bushfires.

He believes that one dollar per week from each Australian would raise \$1 Billion per year with recent history indicating that this figure should cover Australia's costs of natural disasters.

Mr Windsor told the Parliament during his speech:

"The other issue I would like to raise—and I realise that I am going on a bit—is that what we will see, in my view, is what we have seen in the past. This is a natural disaster. We have seen a range of disasters occurring: the Wollongong mudslides, the cyclone in Darwin, Cyclone Larry in Queensland and the Newcastle earthquake. We see a range of political responses to those disasters. You can see a difference between the response mechanisms for the Queensland floods and the Victorian fires even in these early days. We also see issues from time to time in how the insurance companies deal with these issues—whether the water came up as a flood or came down as rain—and the debate that takes place. They are both tragedies, but the legalities of insurance documents can treat them somewhat differently. If the political response moves in or it is not too interested, different results will occur. I have suggested for probably 10 or 15 years now that what we need in this country is a national natural disaster fund, where money is set aside annually for tragedies—irrespective of whether it be a Sydney hailstorm or a Wollongong mudslide.

Trying to determine those insurance payouts went on for years. It did not matter who caused the disasters; they were not caused by the people who lived in the houses. In Coffs Harbour there was a similar situation. We see it time and time again, with different responses depending on the political cycle, the marginality of the seat, the generosity of the government, the balance sheet of the bank or whatever. Surely it is time to tackle this. One of the great things we have done in the last few days is take the politics out of the issue. Surely it is time to continue that and put in place a fund that can be drawn upon when these sorts of circumstances occur. There is no doubt in my mind that, whether Victorians are insured or not, they will have their houses replaced. That is going to send messages in different directions to different people. Maybe, to deal with these tragedies that occur, we should have a fund set up where all of those people affected, irrespective of their economic background, are looked after.

Some people would say, 'Oh, that's socialism,' or whatever else, but in the last week or two I have been told in this building that neoliberalism is dead. Maybe we have to look at how the community can come together, raise a massive amount of money and have it in place for when tragedy occurs. I will give you an idea how simple that is. One dollar a week from every Australian raises a billion dollars in a year. When I did some work on this some years back, there had been, I think, only one tragedy in Australia that had cost over a billion dollars. Normally natural disasters are in the range of \$200 million to \$300 million a year. You get the odd one. I do not know the numbers on Cyclone Larry—these numbers were done with the assistance of the Insurance Council of Australia a few years back. Twenty to 30 cents a week protects any of us from an unfortunate event which could happen to any of us—a hailstorm, and earthquake or any other tragic disaster. I ask the government, when this royal commission appears, to at least have a look at the way in which a fund could be put in place so that we depoliticise the process and treat everybody impacted by a tragedy in the same way.

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