



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Tropical Cyclone Winston**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 24 February 2016**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Wednesday, 24 February 2016	<b>Source</b> House
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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Marles, Richard, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (10:25): Last Saturday, 20 February, Cyclone Winston hit Fiji. It was a category 5 tropical cyclone. The reports that you will see in the papers today are of 29 deaths. More than 8,000 people have been put in evacuation centres. The storm has caused extensive damage right across the nation of Fiji. Essential services such as hospitals, power, water and communications have all been hit. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the power in Fiji has been compromised. Schools have also been hit, and they, in turn, are being used as evacuation centres. Roads are closed due to falling trees and power lines. Some towns, villages and informal settlements have been totally wiped out. There has been extensive flooding in Nadi, Lautoka, Ba and Rakiraki—the latter being totally inaccessible by road. Shelter and sanitation facilities have been compromised. Access to the main ports has been compromised.

It is not just Fiji that has been hit. Tonga has also been hit, with the northern island group of Vava'u experiencing extensive damage and the central island group of Ha'apai also experiencing significant damage.

Tropical cyclones are not new to the Pacific, and most Pacific Island nations have experienced them. It was only last year that Vanuatu experienced Tropical Cyclone Pam. But what we are seeing is a much greater intensity in these cyclones. Cyclone Winston had winds gusting up to 325 kilometres an hour and waves rising up to 12 metres. The ABC has reported it to be the biggest storm ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Fiji Geelong Friendship Club in my electorate has put me in contact with the Ratawa family who live in Newcomb. I spoke this morning to George Ratawa, a person I have known for five years, about his family. He said that his wife, Letila Tatawa, and her family all come from the island of Yacata. Yacata is a small island near Fiji, which has a single village. Letila's family had two houses in the village, which were both destroyed. Their village was washed away by a large tidal wave, and winds swept through all their belongings. Her family are now in Suva in evacuation centres.

The Australian government has committed \$5 million to this. I commend the government on that.

I will have a condolence book in my electorate office which I would encourage constituents to sign. I would also encourage constituents to make donations to the appeals for this tragedy. A tax-deductible donation can be made, for example, to the Red Cross at [redcross.org.au](http://redcross.org.au) or by calling 1800811700.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Ms Price ): There being no further constituency statements by honourable members, the next item of business will be called on.