



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 30 July 1998

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Tsunami Disaster, Papua New Guinea

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (10.02 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That on behalf of all Queenslanders this House places on record its deep sadness at the tragic and appalling loss of life suffered by the people of West Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea as a result of the recent tsunami disaster.

That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the Speaker of the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly and to the Governor of West Sepik Province the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy of the members of the Parliament and the people of Queensland, for the loss sustained by the survivors and families of those lost in the disaster."

During the night of Friday, 17 July, a natural disaster devastated the coast of Papua New Guinea's West Sepik Province. A sequence of three devastating tidal waves struck the coast with such ferocity that whole villages and entire populations were washed away by 10 metre walls of water of a strength and destructiveness that we can barely imagine. It is unlikely that there will ever be an accurate record of the number of lives lost as a result of that devastation.

When we first heard of the disaster, its scale was almost incomprehensible. Our hearts and our prayers went out to all those who had suffered, particularly those who had survived and were left to deal with their injuries and the loss of families and entire communities. It is a measure of our own sympathy for their plight that thousands of Queenslanders—individuals, organisations and businesses alike—opened up their hearts and gave generously to the various appeals.

On behalf of all Queenslanders, I offer to the people of the villages affected by the disaster our profound sympathy for their loss, and our hope that the outpouring of support from all over the world will help them in some small way to return to a semblance of normality. To the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea, I extend our condolences, and I assure our close neighbours, with whom we have strong historical links, that in their hour of need the people of Queensland extend the hand of friendship and assistance.

Next Tuesday I will be meeting with the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Mr Bill Skate, and I intend to pass on the condolences of not only this Parliament but also the people of Queensland personally to him. As I indicated, Papua New Guinea is our closest neighbour, and we have strong historical links. In fact, many people who live in Queensland today have spent considerable time living and working in Papua New Guinea. Indeed, I have two brothers who spent a long time in Goroka and other places in Papua New Guinea, one in fact for 13 years. As a young boy, I visited Papua New Guinea on a number of occasions. I found the people to be very warm and friendly. They are wonderful people who have a special regard for this country, and in particular they have a special regard for this State.

That is why when this disaster happened the Queensland Government moved quickly and established an appeal. Today I thank all those who have contributed to that appeal. I thank also the Commonwealth Bank and Suncorp-Metway, which assisted in that appeal through their outlets for no fee. The Queensland Government contributed \$100,000. Today I am happy to say to the Parliament that in addition to that Queenslanders have contributed a total of \$322,414.13, which brings the total

contribution to date from Queensland in money terms to \$422,404.13. In addition, there have been donations from Queenslanders in kind—various household goods, such as towels, sheets, blankets and so on—which have also been passed on to the people of Papua New Guinea.

It is important that in a very bipartisan way we express our condolences to the people of Papua New Guinea. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition has agreed to second this motion.
