



Speech by

PHIL REEVES

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard 6 August 1998

SISTER M. CONWAY

Mr REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (10.10 a.m.): My achievement of being the first student of St Catherine's Primary School, Wishart, to enter politics and the Parliament pales into insignificance when the actions of my former principal and Year 3 teacher, Sister Margaret Conway, are considered. Sister Margaret has been at the forefront of assisting the people of Papua New Guinea to recover from the tidal wave disaster. Sister Margaret was at home in Aitape when the first wave hit on Friday, 17 July. She spent the next days and nights caring for the injured, feeding the sick, burying the dead and comforting those who lost family members.

I thank Sister Margaret and her Order of the Presentation nuns for their magnificent work under the most horrific conditions. To adequately convey those conditions, I wish to read from a letter that Sister Margaret sent to the Order in Queensland. It states—

"Not long after this we heard crying and ran to see if someone was hurt. A young mother had been washing her baby and the wave rolled them over and the baby was lost. She clung onto me and her other two children clung onto a leg each. What could I say. I don't know how long we stayed like that. Eventually we walked to our house and then I saw people walking towards us. It was at that moment that I realised that we had a terrific disaster on our hands."

I table that letter.

Sister Margaret is an example to us all. She is willing to sacrifice her own life to help those more unfortunate than ourselves. She and those who assisted in the relief effort are the finest of all Australians.
