



Speech by

Mr T. SULLIVAN

MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE

Hansard 20 October 1998

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

Mr SULLIVAN (Chermside—ALP) (10.16 a.m.): Tuesday, 13 October 1998 will be remembered for two things: one was the storm that hit Brisbane, particularly the inner-northern suburbs; the other was the ceremony held at St Stephen's Cathedral. Despite the inclement weather and traffic chaos, a packed cathedral saw all seats taken, with people lining the side aisles, three to five deep at the side doors and 10 to 15 deep at the front doors. Why were these people there and who were they? They were there to support and show solidarity for the congregation of Christian Brothers. There were men and women of all ages—past and present students and parents of students, members of Parliament, the judiciary, business people, office workers and labourers. They were there to say to the Brothers, "We are with you. We support you."

I table a speech given by my Brother Tom Kruger on behalf of the Christian Brothers in which he acknowledged the truth that abuse of children by some of the Brothers had occurred over the years. He also acknowledged that the vast majority of the 4,000 Christian Brothers who taught in Australia were and are good, honest, hardworking and dedicated men. The spontaneous applause from the congregation supported Brother Kruger and his confreres. More than two million young people have been taught by the 4,000 Christian Brothers in Australia. There are a number of members in this House who have benefited educationally, emotionally, spiritually and socially from contact with the Christian Brothers. There are others whose husbands or sons have similarly been assisted.

If one relied only on media reports, one would have thought that the Christian Brothers were a group of organised child abusers. That is a lie. They are not. Members of this House have been convicted of corruption or child abuse, but that does not make every member past or present of this House corrupt or an abuser.

There was no report in the Courier-Mail about this great event; yet if 20 people had been demonstrating outside the cathedral, that of course would have been written about. In common with many other thousands of Queenslanders who sent their support, we express our support for the Christian Brothers.

Time expired.
