



Speech by

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard 25 August 1999

TURKISH EARTHQUAKE

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.35 a.m.): I join with the Premier in expressing the horror and sorrow of Queenslanders at the appalling earthquake tragedy in Turkey. We have all seen the harrowing television pictures from the earthquake zone and read the news reports from there. Many Australians, many Queenslanders, know Turkey well, particularly the area so hard hit by the earthquake. That stirring icon of our nationhood, Gallipoli, is nearby.

The very thought that 18,000 lives— uncountable lives, in effect, since we shall probably never know the exact toll, although we know that 32,000 are still missing—can be snuffed out by nature in this way is horrifying. It also reminds us that however clever humankind is or becomes, nature is always the ultimate master.

Queensland is an open and international society—a place where people from many countries come to live in peace and harmony in safety and security. At this time, we especially remember in our thoughts Queenslanders of Turkish origin. Our hearts go out to the bereaved in Turkey and elsewhere, including relatives of the dead and injured who may reside in this country, and I am pleased to see that practical assistance has also been offered from this country to the authorities in Turkey.

The task of rebuilding the shattered communities afflicted by the disaster will be a very long-term one. The Turkish authorities are talking in terms of having everyone who is now homeless accommodated in tents within a month and in prefabricated buildings within a year. In our comfortable and well-ordered communities here, we need to pause and think about what that means to those thousands of families—some still intact, others shattered. It is a human tragedy of the utmost magnitude.

Over the reconstruction period, there may be a lot more that Australia and Australians, who have long had a special affinity with the Turks, can do to help. This is a time for the generosity of spirit for which we Australians are known and for the down-to-earth practicality that Australians historically have used to beat adversity. At times such as this, Queenslanders, indeed Australians everywhere, speak with one voice. That voice in this instance offers spiritual sustenance, practical help and profound human sympathy.
