



Speech by

**Mr DOUG SLACK**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Hansard 18 July 2000

**CHILDERS BACKPACKERS HOSTEL FIRE**

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (10.08 a.m.): As the member representing Childers, I wish to acknowledge the support and help the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Government have given to the people of Childers in relation to the tragic hostel fire there. It is appropriate that we have put on record our condolences to the families of those who died in that tragic incident. I personally extend my condolences and sympathy to those families.

If there is any good to come of that particular fire—I do not know that there really is—and if there is anything we need to acknowledge in a positive way, it is the contribution made by the people of Childers themselves. The way they reacted to the tragedy that had befallen them was phenomenal. Their reaction was immediate and superhuman.

I pay tribute to the emergency services groups, the shire mayor in particular, the councillors, the SES, the fire service, the Police Service, the Ambulance Service, the doctors, the nurses, the counsellors, the ministers fraternal, the vegetable growers and the local media. They all reacted quickly. They did what they could. They would have liked to have done more. That was a common statement made: they did what they could; they would have liked to have done more. The members of the Childers community suffered sleepless nights. It was a tremendous emotional drain for them. They felt that in many ways they had let down the backpackers and their families, because the backpackers were a vibrant part of their community. They were an integral part of the vegetable/horticultural industry.

As a member of Parliament, it was rewarding to note the response by all the services in this small community that was thrust into a position of tragedy. Their training really shone through. That response is something of which we can all be very proud. The really outstanding feature was the way in which this small community rallied, the way in which it coped under the unyielding glare of the international media. Many dignitaries visited the community. All Governments involved in the tragedy reacted well, including the State Government, the Federal Government and international Governments.

**Mr Beattie:** And you did, too.

**Mr SLACK:** I thank the Premier.

The backpackers were a very vibrant part of that community. The people of Childers will need ongoing help. They are emotionally drained; they are tired; they have reconstruction to undertake. I know that the Premier and Deputy Premier are sympathetic, as is the Federal Government, and I expect that the help will be readily forthcoming and ongoing.

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