




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Townsville, Search for Missing Children

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.46 pm): Today I rise to report the details of a search conducted on the weekend of two young children who went missing at approximately four o'clock on Saturday, 16 May 2015. On that Saturday in a local street in Wulguru five-year-old Tim Carter went next door to play with his six-year-old friend Nicholas Baxter—or so his mother thought. Any parent in this state of ours would be immediately filled with fear, anxiety and nervousness as it was discovered that both boys had wandered off. The parents and neighbours went immediately in search of these two adventurous boys. At 6 pm on Saturday their worst fears were realised that these two young boys were indeed missing and contact with the QPS was made. Under the guidance of Acting Inspector Chris Lawson of the Queensland Police Service in Townsville, a land search operation was immediately coordinated of the last known location of the boys. Assistance was sought from the SES and Queensland government aircraft, including helicopters from the Townsville base, Cairns and Mackay. Fifteen SES personnel were on the ground within an hour of notification and commenced searching, and the helicopters were able to assist immediately. The boys were unable to be located during the evening and overnight and, as such, the search was scaled up on Sunday when a request was made for ADF staff to assist. I am pleased to report that one of the fastest approvals was acquired by the ADF in Canberra that Sunday morning. Subsequently, over 100 Army personnel were deployed to assist in search operations.

Townsville enjoys a close relationship with the ADF and this was on display on Sunday, as it was indeed ADF personnel who eventually found the boys. Brigadier Roger Noble should be acknowledged for what was an outstanding and professional response from soldiers at Lavarack Barracks. As the search operations ramped up, over 45 SES personnel were on the ground during Sunday. Well done to each of them for their outstanding efforts. Indeed, many locals volunteered their own time in search of the boys, including one on horseback. Locals arrived donating food and water throughout the day. They, too, should be acknowledged and thanked by this government.

Having been involved in many searches as a flight paramedic over the years, I am acutely aware of the challenges of coordinating and the logistics required to conduct such search operations. Over 180 volunteers from numerous agencies were involved and whilst I would like to name all of them time is limited. However, I am very happy to report that on Sunday at 1345 the two boys were located by ADF Gunners Ben Morrison and Jason Goldsmith along with Major Mick Cook.

The Townsville community should feel safe in the knowledge that when called upon our communities, emergency services and ADF can come together, and this outcome clearly demonstrates this. In the brief that I received from the acting inspector, I would like to place on record the outstanding work of land search and rescue coordinators Sergeant Matthew Pegg, Senior Constable Jason Jesse and Acting Sergeant Matthew Dixon, who worked all Saturday and Sunday preparing search patterns and coordinating. Well done!