




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Agnes Water, Maritime Incident

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.52 pm): I stand proud in the House tonight as I represent the best electorate in Queensland. Last night I was reminded of just how privileged I am to call the Burnett electorate home. Yesterday afternoon the Agnes Water/1770 community was struck by a disaster following a fire which broke out on a popular tourist vessel *The Spirit of 1770*. Thankfully, all 42 passengers and four crew who were on board the vessel were brought home safely. It is a miracle that no-one was injured.

Tonight I wish to pay tribute and thank everyone who was involved in the swift and safe rescue of those 46 caught up in this horrific event. Out of the tragedy, the township of Agnes Water and surrounding districts have shown incredible community spirit. The rescue was an enormous team effort by all involved including the Queensland Police Service and Ambulance Service, volunteer marine rescue crews and CareFlight, not to mention the volunteers who also participated. It was not just the trained emergency crews for whom we are thankful today. Right there beside our trained crews, every citizen dived in to support the rescue efforts including the likes of a number of local charter boat operators, cafe staff and other selfless individuals.

Terrified, shocked, exhausted and cold, passengers and crew caught up in the ordeal arrived onshore last night to the comfort and the arms of the locals. Staff from the 1770 Marina Cafe were on hand until late last night offering passengers something to eat and a drink, the warmth of a blanket and other comforts and to console those in need of what was surely a traumatic experience. We acknowledge 1770 LARC! Tours and Sandra and Michael Price from Deepwater Laundry Services for offering at no cost to wash all of the blankets and clothes that were donated to the passengers from locals last night. Our thoughts are with the owners and operators of the 1770 Lady Musgrave tours in this traumatic time.

However, the community compassion did not stop there. I am told that local hotels and other individuals from the township offered passengers accommodation for the night while they rested up and recovered. I also want to take a moment to thank the hospital staff, particularly those working in Bundaberg Hospital's emergency ward, who worked around the clock to assess passengers and provide them with warm blankets and fresh clothes. I commend the entire community for banding together to assist right up until late last night to ensure that each and every passenger was supported throughout the ordeal. It is also important that I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for last night keeping me up to date with timely situational reports. It was very reassuring to know that we were all working together for a great outcome.

Our community spirit is well and truly alive in the Burnett. Of course, this weekend I will be travelling to Agnes Water to share with the Rotary Club their charter night to be held this Saturday night in the community hall. I wish all the people in the Rotary Club all the success as they forge a new club in the Agnes Water/1770 area. Again, I pay tribute to the community in this traumatic time of the disaster that occurred yesterday.