




Speech By
Hon. Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

1770, Search and Rescue Operation

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (10.07 pm): I rise to make a short ministerial statement. The facts I am about to present are advised to me as the situation is presently. The Queensland Police Service has been coordinating a search and rescue operation following a fire on a tourist catamaran at sea approximately 10 nautical miles east of the Town of 1770. At around four o'clock this afternoon the commercial vessel caught fire with 46 people, including crew, on board. At 4.30 the vessel was abandoned and all passengers and crew were placed into life rafts. The Gladstone Water Police responded to the surface rescue with the police vessel *PG Kidd* while the Australian Maritime Safety Authority reacted by sending a helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft. I am pleased to advise that based on the present advice all passengers have been accounted for.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr BYRNE: They were transferred to various boats and arrived at the Town of 1770 in the Gladstone Volunteer Marine Rescue vessel and two private vessels. I am advised that, while there are no reports of injury at this time, some seasickness and exposure to the elements can be expected. Life rafts are being recovered and the search and rescue coordinator will stand down when all rescue vessels have returned to port.

The Queensland Police Service and Maritime Safety Queensland have been in regular contact with us this evening and with each other. I spoke earlier to the volunteer marine rescue staff in Gladstone. The volunteer marine review vessel from Round Hill was first on the scene and stayed with the life rafts.

This week is National Volunteer Week, and this incident and the swift response reflects the great value of all of our volunteers who keep Queenslanders safe. I take this opportunity to wish the passengers well after their ordeal and to thank the officers who took part in this combined agency response to bring those passengers and crew to safety.