



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2017

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT**

***Dianne; Burnett Electorate***

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.36 pm): The communities of Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy in the northern part of my electorate have been rocked by yet another tragedy after the fishing vessel *Dianne* sunk off the coastline of Seventeen Seventy. Today I want to acknowledge the brave men and women in this community—our unsung heroes—who selflessly joined the extensive search and rescue efforts for the trawler men lost at sea. Many people from this incredibly resilient community braved the dangerous seas in the desperate search, including Josie Meng and crew from VMR Round Hill, Tony and Sandy Clairs from 1770 Creek2Reef on board the private vessel *Bulletproof*, Neil and Mark Mergard at 1770 LARC! Tours, Agnes Water emergency services and Water Police from Agnes Water and Gladstone along with other local fishermen and other residents who offered their assistance where they could. I also want to acknowledge the Mango Tree Motel, which provided lone survivor Ruben McDornan with accommodation.

I could not be prouder of this tight-knit community for pulling together at this distressing time. The communities of Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy have had their fair share of tragedies in recent times and they continue to show their strength, their resilience and their compassion. In further demonstrating their depth of compassion, the community has now set up a fund to help the families of the fishermen involved in the tragedy. Our thoughts are with the families of the crewmen at this difficult time.

Unfortunately, I must also highlight that search efforts have been hampered by the ongoing issue of dredging of Round Hill Creek. VMR Round Hill has reported that boats often get stuck on the sandbar at Round Hill Creek, the marine entry point. This is obviously a serious safety concern and our VMR crew often has difficulties responding to marine rescue incidents like this tragedy. They and other emergency services just need to get in and out of this important waterway.

I cannot talk about the communities of the Discovery Coast without mentioning their sheer frustrations about other serious matters threatening their livelihoods. Every time the region experiences major weather events the communities of Agnes Water and Seventeen Seventy and nearby communities of Baffle Creek, Rosedale and Lowmead are often isolated for weeks at a time. This is not new information. I have campaigned vigorously on this issue and members will recall that I have highlighted the plight of these residents on a number of occasions for flood-proofing these main access routes into this area, yet here we go again with locals and business owners pleading for action after their communities were again left stranded after last week's downpour.

At least 2,000 permanent residents were cut off from the rest of the region for a week due to flooding—cut off from vital health services, medical supplies, food, schools and other essential services. To further highlight their plight, the local pharmacy even ran out of certain medications. In this day and age, everyone deserves connectivity to reach vital services. It was not just the residents who were cut

off; its 4,000 visitors per week were cut off from accessing the township. The community heavily relies on the economic benefits these 4,000 tourists each week bring. They are a major driver for the region. Last week alone, group bookings for large events, such as the Rotary conference for 200 delegates, were cancelled, along with other forward bookings. I cannot stress enough that tourism is the lifeblood of this community. When the people of the Discovery Coast are needed in time of distress, time and time again they have proven that they are there. It is now our time to help them.