




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2020

ADJOURNMENT

Long, Mr RP

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.11 pm): Tonight I call for Childers backpacker mass murderer Robert Paul Long to remain behind bars. I acknowledge survivor Richard, who is in the gallery with us tonight. At that time, he was here on a working holiday and, like many others, has fought hard to get this wrong righted. On behalf of the victims, the survivors of the fire and their families, we want to make a case for Robert Long's parole application to be quashed. The convicted killer's bid for freedom is causing indescribable torment to the survivors and their families as we reach the 20-year anniversary of the fire. Two decades on, victims and their families are reliving the nightmare all over again, while facing the possibility that that despicable man could be let out of jail. Fifteen young lives were cut short and another 70 victims have been left emotionally scarred for eternity because of that evil man.

I have letters from survivors, including Richard, who were in the prime of their lives when they experienced the horrific Childers fire. The letters outline the significant trauma that they experienced then and continue to experience from the nightmare. I table those electronically, so that others can reflect on how important this issue is.

Tabled paper: Letter, undated, from Kate and Lauren, to the Parole Board Queensland, regarding the parole application by Mr Robert Paul Long and the Childers Backpacker Hostel fire [907](#).

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 3 June 2020, to the Parole Board of Queensland, regarding the parole application by Mr Robert Paul Long and the Childers Backpacker Hostel fire [908](#).

Survivor Kate Morris suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. In her letter she outlines how, to this day, she and her sister suffer from nightmares. They both suffer from flashbacks and anxiety. In part her letter states—

I will never forget the noise, smell and the screams inside the building, every day I still think about our friends and fellow travellers who never made it. They were murdered in their sleep by an absolute lunatic who purposely tried to kill us all.

We in this chamber need to remember that that man lit a fire when he knew everyone was sleeping. He sprayed accelerant on the fire. He threw pillows onto the fire. He knew the smoke alarms were disconnected. He wanted to kill 84 people that night. We should not rest until we secure a guarantee that that convicted killer will remain behind bars for the rest of his life. The parole application for Robert Long should be burnt, just like he burnt down the historic backpackers hostel in Childers. One of Australia's worst mass murderers deserves to be locked up for life. He belongs behind bars.

We call on the House to do all it can to ensure that Robert Long never gets parole. Let's not forget that he has only ever been convicted of two deaths. Let's not allow this issue to become a potential wrong. Those people all over the world who have been affected by this issue deserve our justice. Those people who put so much in over 20 years deserve our justice. We in this state in particular must take action on Robert Long's issues that confront us. I know from just recently that hardened police officers are still reliving this issue 20 years on and are deeply disturbed. The previous mayor of the Isis Council, Bill Trevor, who did a tireless job, deserves our support in keeping Robert Long behind bars for the rest of his natural life.