



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Victorian Bushfires

SPEECH

Thursday, 4 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (9.49 am)—It was 222 years ago that the first church service was held at Sydney Cove. Reverend Richard Johnson was the preacher at that service. I am going to another service on Sunday. That service is at Labertouche. There we will be remembering what happened in the terrible fires that swept through Victoria. I was standing in my kitchen; the Jon Faine program was on—Jon Faine normally does not bring me to tears, but he should—and I could not help but be moved by what I heard. This was months after the fires. A woman came on the program and she was explaining through her veil of tears what it was like to be a mum who had lost a daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren. The pain that that woman was expressing through the radio was such that, unless you had experienced the pain yourself or heard what she was saying, you could not help but be moved by it and be sensitive to her plight. You could not help but know that there were many people like her who had got up to an ordinary day and had their lives changed in a moment. By nightfall, not only did we have many dead; we had people who became heroes overnight by their actions: what they said, what they did and how they reacted.

That will go on at this small get together, this small church service at Labertouche. In fact, there is an inward feeling of: ‘Just leave us alone. Just let us think about this together. Let us grieve together.’ More importantly, we as a community and as a parliament must remember that, where there are tragedies and those tragedies have affected lives, in those lives the grief goes on and on and on. We have to be sensitive to knowing that. To that mum, whose name was Joy or Joan—if you are listening Joy or Joan—we remember you. We will not forget that there are people still hurting today. Even with all the work that we have done together as a parliament in a bipartisan way—and the parliamentary secretary is here and knows exactly what I am talking about—you should know that on this day we are with you, that we think about you now and again as you drift across our minds and that this parliament will continue to do all that it can, whenever it can, to participate in your place.