



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard 17 September 1998

MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (6.15 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete all words after 'by' and insert the following—

'Members of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority in the vital service they provide to Queensland communities and their dedication in performing that duty.'"

Over the past 10 weeks, I have taken the opportunity to visit a number of fire stations throughout the State and to meet with firefighters on the ground. I have been very impressed by their dedication, commitment and loyalty to the people in their communities. I have lost count of the number of time firies have told me how good it was to see a Minister at their station. The firies in Caloundra bestowed a great honour on me recently when they made me an honorary firefighter for the north coast region, complete with a plaque and a lapel badge that I am wearing with pride tonight.

Barely a day goes by that we do not hear or read about the deeds of this State's firefighters. Whether it is in response to structural fires or wildfires, rescuing people trapped in blazing buildings or cutting victims from the tangled wrecks of roads accidents, firefighters save lives. All too often we see dramatic television footage of roaring flames engulfing buildings. Often we see the human side, the firefighter cradling the young child who, moments earlier, has been plucked from the seat of the blaze. Recently, emergency service workers were shown knee-deep in foam as they responded to a fatal accident involving a tanker on the Bruce Highway north of Gympie. There they were, doing their job. On that occasion, the job was to ensure that there was no massive explosion.

Firefighters and other emergency service personnel put their lives on the line to save the lives of others and to protect property—yours and mine, Mr Speaker. Each year their actions save insurance companies many, many millions of dollars in fire damage payouts. In Queensland, we know that if a fire breaks out in our homes, there will be a big red truck there within minutes to douse the flames. We also know that, if there is a bushfire, scores of local volunteers will activate to protect life and property in their communities. It must be very frustrating for the volunteers who turn out to fight fires to find that often they have been deliberately lit by a small group of people who do not give a damn that their actions can cost lives or cause millions of dollars in damage. But they still respond; it is their job, a job they do so well, a job they do every day of every week.

Only last week we had firefighters cast in a different role. They were called in to remove from a Brisbane city building a canister believed to contain the deadly legionella bacteria. It was suspected that the canister had been placed in the building deliberately in a crude but nevertheless potentially deadly attempt at sabotage. Airlie Beach man Tim Stilwell owes his life to local firefighters, who earlier this month dragged him unconscious from his burning apartment. Rockhampton toddler Ayden Renes will be able to tell his own children about how two local firefighters saved his life. His mother Kelly heaped praise on the firefighters after they gave him medical assistance early last month. The youngster began convulsing, then stopped breathing. Ayden stayed in hospital overnight. He was back home the following day none the worse for wear. It is all in a day's work for our firies.

Just as important is the proactive fire education and fire prevention work done by the QFRA, both urban and rural divisions. Firefighters and volunteers take pride in preventing fires through activities by visiting schools to preach about taking precautions against the dangers of fire, the need to install smoke detectors in homes and the worth of plain commonsense in and around the home. They want

people to minimise the risk of fire. That can be as simple as clearing the area around our homes. In the bush, the rural fire brigades ensure that Queensland does not face the same annual bushfire threat that plagues other States. Thankfully, we have not had a disaster of the magnitude of the Ash Wednesday or Black Friday tragedies. A constant program of strategic hazard reduction burning is performed by hundreds of brigades across the State.

Our firefighters and rural volunteers across the State deserve our support. Mr Speaker, this Government is fully aware of the job they do for you, for me and for every other member in this Chamber and for every Queenslander. This debate provides the perfect opportunity for each and every one of us in the Chamber to say thank you on behalf of all Queenslanders to our 2,000 permanent, 2,000 auxiliary and almost 50,000 rural volunteers.

Time expired.
