



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fire Awareness Week

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.48 a.m.), by leave: Fire can have costly and, tragically, often deadly consequences. Each of us must be made aware of the destructive element of fire, be it in the bush, in the city or town, or in the home. The concept of fire prevention was born in the aftermath of the great fire of Chicago in 1871. Thought to have been caused by an overturned hurricane lamp, that blaze killed 200 people and destroyed 17,500 buildings.

The first Fire Prevention Week in America took place in 1922. Australia adopted a similar program some years later and since 1961 the Queensland Fire Protection Association has joined with our fire services for a week of fire awareness activities. Every year, fire services across the country join together to alert the public to fire safety and fire prevention issues. In Queensland, Fire Awareness Week begins on Sunday. Community fire prevention and awareness is of vital importance. Fire is one of the most destructive, devastating and terrifying forces of nature, and it is something everyone should work together to prevent, or at least minimise. Members will remember the graphic television footage of the wildfires in the Blue Mountains and those in the Gippsland area of Victoria only last Sunday. Firefighters face a constant struggle to make the community fire-safety aware. They work tirelessly in urban and bush communities to push their message home.

A major focus of Fire Awareness Week in Queensland will be on smoke alarms and their value as an early warning in the event of fire. Research shows that more than one million Queenslanders still live in properties that are not protected by smoke alarms. The lifesaving qualities are evident when one considers that there has not been a single fatality in a house with a properly installed and working smoke alarm. At a cost of less than \$15, alarms must be the cheapest form of life insurance there is, and what price a life!

Woolworths has once again made a number of smoke alarms available to new mothers during Fire Awareness Week. In partnership with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, Queensland Health and the Fire Protection Association, Woolworths will be distributing free smoke alarm vouchers to every woman who gives birth in a Queensland hospital during Fire Awareness Week. The new mother will also receive a fire safety information package. I cannot think of a more appropriate birthday gift.

The aim of Fire Awareness Week is to increase public awareness of fire safety issues. We want to reduce deaths, injuries and loss of property. Queenslanders are far too valuable to lose. In both urban and rural areas, the QFRA has fully embraced the concept. Firefighters across the State have organised a wide range of awareness programs. Most of these are local initiatives by locals for their local communities. Activities include street banners, a Fire Awareness Expo at Ipswich on Sunday, a trade display in Brisbane's King George Square on 29 October, letter drops, shopping centre displays, open days at fire stations, public information sessions and fire safety demonstrations, and free advice to owners of property at risk of fire. People should visit their local station, pick up a brochure and make their property safer.

It is a tragedy when we have to send a fire engine to put out a house fire and an ambulance to rush badly burned children to hospital. Every time we see firefighters battling a house blaze or carrying a child to safety we should stop, take stock and ask: could this have been my family? Being aware of fire danger saves lives.