



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

SES Week

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.04 a.m.), by leave: This week is SES Week. It provides the opportunity for Queensland to say thankyou to its thousands of State Emergency Service volunteers. The State Emergency Service comprises 33,000 volunteers—16,000 of them active members of local groups—who are poised to swing into action at a moment's notice. The volunteers train more than 260,000 hours each year and spend more than 50,000 hours a year performing operational duties. In any 24-hour period, up to 45 SES volunteers are activated in any number of roles.

The SES was born after the disastrous 1974 floods, replacing the old Civil Defence organisation. In the years since, volunteers have become a highly trained civilian "army" who are proud of their ability to respond in times of need to help fellow Queenslanders. Queensland's SES volunteers are the best in Australia. They are tops because they are exposed to a wide range of natural disasters and incidents and, consequently, are better trained and prepared to respond to any situation. They work in sometimes atrocious and dangerous conditions, thinking only of helping others. Only last week, the Logan unit was activated to help police gather evidence after a bomb was detonated in their area. In my electorate of Currumbin, 30 volunteers helped police search for evidence after the brutal rape of an 11-year-old schoolgirl. And again on the Gold Coast on Monday, 20 SES volunteers joined police in the search for the killer of a teenage girl.

The SES provides invaluable support in many police operations, helping police gather evidence at crime scenes and assisting in land searches for lost children and adults. In recent weeks we have seen scores of volunteers activated across the State in the clean-up in the wake of unseasonal floods and vicious storms which have lashed the State. With Queensland facing potentially its worst storm and cyclone season for years, volunteers will probably play an even more vital role in the next few months than they have for years. Queensland is the State most prone to natural disasters. The Bureau of Meteorology is tipping that this summer could be our worst in recent memory in terms of storms and cyclones. The Department of Emergency Services is conducting public awareness campaigns along the coast—from the Gold Coast to the far north—warning of the dangers of cyclones and storm surges. The message is for people to be prepared. We must not be complacent. The campaign is being run in conjunction with the Meteorology Bureau, local councils and local SES units.

SES Week, which I was happy to launch on Sunday with Premier Peter Beattie, is an opportunity to promote the dedication, commitment and skill of SES volunteers and to provide timely public awareness messages. It is also the opportunity for us to say thanks to the employers who allow volunteers time off so that they can work for others. Without this support, and without the support of local government, the SES could not be the highly efficient organisation that it is. Our communities in 1998 are better protected than in the past, thanks to SES teams which are trained, prepared and aware. Queensland owes our volunteers—both past and present—a massive vote of thanks. I also ask Queenslanders to heed the message about preparing for potential disasters. It might save property losses, their life, or the life of a loved one.
