



Speech by

**Hon. MERRI ROSE**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Hansard 19 November 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Ambulance Services**

**Hon. M. ROSE** (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: The State Government is committed to enhancing ambulance services to the people of Queensland. We will deliver free ambulance services to an estimated 850,000 pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants from 1 January 1999. This is the Government's way of thanking our seniors, who have been valuable contributors to Queensland society over many years.

However, we are committed to improving emergency responses for every Queenslanders. As part of this financial year's budget, I announced that 44 new ambulance officer positions would be created around the State. In fact, I am pleased to announce today that there will be 65 extra operational positions. Already, an additional 24 student and ambulance officer positions have been allocated to the regions. They went to Greater Brisbane, two ambulance officers; South East, nine ambulance officers and one transport officer; North Coast, eight students; South West, one communications operator; Central, one officer; Northern, one student; and Far North, one student.

Another 41 positions, costing almost \$2m, have been created. There are 18 new ambulance officers and 23 student positions. Two ambulance officers and three students will go to Townsville, one officer and a student to Rockhampton, an officer and student to Toowoomba, four officers and three students to Caloundra, six officers and six students to Greater Brisbane, four ambulance officers and six students to be shared by Beenleigh, Southport and Ipswich and three students for Cairns. This allocation will go some way towards lightening the load of our dedicated officers who are out there saving lives in difficult, sometimes life-threatening, circumstances.

Over the past couple of weeks we have seen first-hand the wonderful work performed by our ambulance officers at two horrific crashes, one at Cunningham's Gap and one on the Warrego Highway between Toowoomba and Oakey. While nothing diminishes the tragic loss of life resulting from those accidents, both involving buses, the fast response, the professionalism and the expertise of ambulance officers on the scene at both incidents no doubt saved lives. But many incidents attended by QAS staff do not make the headlines. In fact, our ambos are called out to around 460,000 incidents each year—about 123,000 of them Code 1 emergencies. Our ambulance officers save lives every day.

The 65 extra operational positions this year will help lighten their load. In addition to the new positions, the QAS will get 50 new or replacement vehicles and 10 new or replacement stations this year. But enhancing emergency response is about more than just putting extra staff and vehicles on the road. This Government is installing new technology, including computer-aided dispatch and automatic vehicle location systems. The technology will provide support to our front-line ambulance officers and help boost ambulance responses to emergencies.

The QAS budget also includes \$500,000 for training communications staff around the State. In addition, \$300,000 will be spent on establishing residences in remote areas of the State to attract ambulance officers to those regions. This boost acknowledges the need for adequate incentives to ensure rural and remote areas have access to quality ambulance services.

The combination of these initiatives represents a significant boost in resourcing for the Queensland Ambulance Service. Importantly, it also means 65 extra jobs for Queensland. It means a stronger future for the Queensland Ambulance Service, and it means peace of mind and better patient outcomes for Queenslanders.