



Speech by

**Mr M. VEIVERS**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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Hansard 17 September 1998

**MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Mr VEIVERS** (Southport—NPA) (6.24 p.m.): I rise to support the Opposition's motion. This morning and in previous weeks, the Honourable Minister has made a number of serious allegations about me and the coalition Government regarding the funding situation of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority and, more importantly, that the coalition Government had done nothing to address issues about which she has spoken. Let me say that the Honourable the Minister has gone from a position last week where, like Sergeant Schultz, she knew nothing to a position this week where she knows next to nothing. It seems that, in keeping with the style of Labor advisers, she has been told half-truths, half stories and half facts.

What is most worrying is that she has criticised the board of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority without having the decency of allowing that board to see the Coopers report. That is most important. Had she done that, she would have been prevented from making those errors and misrepresentations in her statement and making a fool of herself. As I said this morning, we will see that when she has the decency of giving the board the report and, I might add, letting us see it as well.

How can anyone believe a person who keeps reports secret, especially when we know that a lot of her statements are hot air? It is apparent that she is trying to make the board look bad so that she can get rid of it, and also the ambulance board, and put firefighters and ambulance officers back under the control of the director-general. God help firefighters and ambulance officers if that happens, because no-one else will.

However, most disappointing of all is that she does not believe that the firefighters deserved a pay increase. For six years under the Labor Government, these men and women went without a pay rise and, if this Government has its way, it seems that they will go for another six years without a pay rise. I and other members on this side of the House have the highest regard for firefighters and their families. We understand that they put their lives on the line to protect the lives of Queenslanders and their property. To criticise them, as this Minister has done, when they were among the lowest paid firefighters in Australia is absolutely mind blowing. The Minister is not in the Chamber, but for her to tell these brave men and women—

**Mrs Rose:** I am behind you.

**Mr VEIVERS:** That is even worse. That is a worry. Is the Minister going to vote with the Opposition after all? That is really refreshing to hear. This Minister can tell these brave men and women—

**Mrs Rose** interjected.

**Mr VEIVERS:** The Minister cannot interject unless she is sitting in her correct seat. She should get back over to the other side. For the Minister to tell these brave men and women that they do not deserve the same pay as their brothers and sisters in other States is totally astonishing. I may joke a little, but this is very serious business. When I took over the Queensland fire service, it was in an absolute mess. Morale was on the floor. At Kemp Place up to 60% went out on sick pay. Within seven months of the board coming into action, the percentage of people on sick pay dropped to 3%. That saved the taxpayers of Queensland somewhere in the vicinity of \$120,000 to \$140,000 a week. Morale went through the roof.

This Minister is going to put this service back under the control of the director-general and the bureaucrats—where it was before when morale was slipping. It is slipping now. The firefighters are not happy. How dare this Minister criticise our firefighters. Let me say that they deserve——

**Mr Sullivan:** She didn't, and you know that.

**Mr VEIVERS:** She did. She said that they did not deserve the money they received, and you were one of the mugs who sat in here for six years——

**Mr Sullivan:** No.

**Mr VEIVERS:** You did, and you let them go for six years without a pay rise.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Southport will withdraw those words. They are unparliamentary.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I withdraw. This honourable member, who acts like a mug, sat in this Chamber for six years.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! You will withdraw that word again.

**Mr VEIVERS:** I withdraw that the member is a mug. This incompetent sat here for six years and did not go along with giving the firefighters a raise. The former shadow Ministers, the honourable member for Murrumba, and the honourable member for Rockhampton, Mr Schwarten, are sitting opposite. They agreed with the coalition Government setting up the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. Government members should not ever say to me that the coalition Government did not look after them. The Labor Government did not look after them for six years. It did not give them a pay rise. The firefighters did not know where they were going. Morale was shot to pieces until the coalition Government came along. Yet this Minister, who is sitting opposite, wants to do the same thing by abolishing the board and going back to the firefighters being under the control of the bureaucrats. It is unbelievable. I just hope that the firefighters and their families remember that this is the second Labor Minister who does not appreciate them, although she did not actually call them wankers.

Time expired.

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