



Speech by

**Hon. J. FOURAS**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

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Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL  
Estimates Committee B  
Report**

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.06 p.m.): I am pleased to take part in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee B. I wish to refer specifically to Government support for our coastal volunteers—the people who protect surfers and boaties every day in all conditions. I commend the Minister, Merri Rose, on the level of that support. As a former surf-lifesaver, I am pleased to note that Surf Life Saving Queensland received a record \$3.7m for 1999-2000 under the Government's Volunteers Guarding Our Coast Initiative. This Budget has provided the second major boost to funding for surf-lifesaving. There is another \$650,000 for Surf Life Saving Queensland, taking the total increase in two Budgets to \$1.3m. This additional funding is being used for the accreditation of new clubs, to increase surf-lifesaving patrols on our beaches and for safety equipment, such as inflatable rescue boats, oxygen resuscitation equipment, defibrillators, four-wheeled bikes and jet skis. There will also be funds to cover workers compensation premiums for lifesavers and to extend life-saving support services, including the operation of midweek jet boat patrols during school holidays on both the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast.

This financial year the Government will provide a total of more than \$4m to SLSQ, making it the envy of its counterparts in every other Australian State. In addition to the \$3.7m from the Department of Emergency Services, the Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing is contributing \$320,000-odd under development and minor facilities programs. There has been a one-off grant totalling \$80,000 from the Premier's office.

Surf-lifesaving volunteers have saved more than 71,000 lives since the surf-lifesaving movement was formed some 60 years ago. In addition to saving lives on our beaches, they perform beach patrols and surveillance, carry out first-aid treatments, conduct public education campaigns and provide a 24-hour emergency response service to south-east Queensland via helicopters and jet rescue boats on the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. Last summer they saved more than 2,600 lives. About 68,000 preventive actions were carried out, and 7,200-odd first-aid treatments were administered. Approximately 32 resuscitations were performed and 4,395 marine stinger treatments were administered. I was a first aid officer for some years at Main Beach surf club. I remember that, when the bluebottles were around, we were kept busy all day, every day. It is quite dramatic to catch a wave and lift yourself out of the surf and be surrounded by bluebottles.

I was also pleased to see that the counter disaster and rescue services budget includes the first \$1m of \$2.5m over two years to help Volunteer Marine Rescue and Coastguard units improve boat safety for their volunteer crews. The VMR and Coastguard will receive \$500,000 each this year and \$750,000 each next financial year to help units meet the cost of bringing vessels into survey in line with new marine safety regulations.

The marine rescue volunteers do a fantastic job. They often put their lives on the line when they go to sea in extreme conditions to help others. It is easy to see why Queensland's Volunteer Marine Rescue units are the envy of those in other States. The Government does recognise the magnificent work done by these blue water lifesavers. I know that the level of support will continue.

In the brief time I have left I would like to talk about the lack of money for legal aid in Queensland. I note, however, that the Minister for Justice has allocated \$2.5m more for Legal Aid Queensland. That has increased to \$5m over two Budgets. At the same time, we have cutbacks from the Federal Government. There has been a lot of comment lately about how penny wise and pound foolish this is in terms of the costs impacting on our society. Ultimately, the test of any true democracy is the extent that we minimise social disadvantage. It is appalling really that we are actually costing the society money. It is about sustaining a surplus so that down the road there will be the next round of tax cuts to buy the next election. I think that is appalling. It is just unbelievable that the Federal Government would behave in such a way.

Time expired.

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