



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard 10 March 1999

SUNSHINE COAST FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (10.24 a.m.): I raise a matter of concern regarding firefighters on the Sunshine Coast. The coalition in Government gave permission for the Caloundra fire station to relocate. It provided over \$1m for it to do so. I congratulate the current Minister on following through on that project. Firefighters will now be able to shift into the station that was allocated by the coalition Government.

I draw the Minister's attention to firefighters' concerns that locker rooms, showers and toilets will not be provided in the section that was being built to house them, particularly when they are off duty and at night. Those facilities were certainly included in the budget and should be provided. People should not have to walk outside that unit and go into the main office in order to use those facilities.

It is also of concern that the firefighters in Caloundra and the Sunshine Coast have been ordered to decrease their manning levels. A safe manning level is one officer and three firefighters per shift. That was working under the coalition Government. It has worked in Caloundra and on the Sunshine Coast for 10 years or more.

The ratepayers of Caloundra have been paying the highest fire levy for some time now. They should receive the appropriate crewing level of one plus three or have a reduced fire levy. Caloundra ratepayers provide \$2.1m to the Queensland Government through the fire levy. The Caloundra station budget is around \$1.5m, so \$600,000 or so goes to other areas. This is the same situation as in Maroochydore and in Bundaberg.

Firefighters know that they have to work within a budget—they are trying to do so—but a lot of their budget overspends are due to courses that the employer, the Government, requires them to do—courses such as senior first aid and resuscitation, which will improve the service given to the public.

Time expired.
