



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard 19 August 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.19 a.m.), by leave: Our firefighters put their lives on the line every day, whether they are called out to fight a structural fire, contain a raging bushfire, rescue a person from a car wreck or deal with a highly toxic chemical spill. Over the years our rural, auxiliary and permanent firefighters have saved millions of dollars worth of property and countless lives. But they also need to be able to protect their own lives. It is only right that they have the best equipment available to carry out their dangerous, even life-threatening, job.

I am delighted to announce a number of recent developments that will benefit both our firefighters and the communities they serve well into the new millennium. Earlier this month, Premier Peter Beattie and I announced a record \$20m boost for new firefighting appliances this financial year. This equates to more than 170 new fire trucks being delivered to stations across the State. The vehicles range from light and medium attacks for rural use to pumper tankers suitable for use in urban and rural areas and to prototypes for big city use worth almost \$500,000 fully equipped.

This massive injection of new vehicles will significantly lower the average age of our emergency fleet, providing our firefighters with greater safety and improving the service provided to householders and industry. It comes on top of a \$4m boost to the Rural Fire Service fleet last financial year which allowed 73 medium attack fire appliances to be delivered to rural volunteer fire brigades across the State. Some of these brigades had been operating with vehicles up to 30 years old. Another 24 light attack fire trucks are due to be delivered to brigades in the near future.

But the good news does not stop there. Most of the vehicles to be built this year will be built right here in Queensland. Four of the five companies building urban appliances will use local facilities and local staff. Another local company will build the rural trucks at Carole Park, just south of Brisbane. Already at least 120 jobs have been created at two companies alone.

This year there will be more good news for our firefighters and the communities they protect. There will be more money for other vital resources. New chemical suits, radio equipment and road accident and other rescue gear will be delivered to fire stations around the State. The QFRA's highly successful public education and community awareness programs, such as Fire Ed for Year 1 students and Operation Safe Home for householders, will be expanded. They will help to save Queenslanders' lives.

When this Government came to power, it inherited a fire service that was lurching towards financial ruin. We were committed to securing the future of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority. We achieved that with a minimal rise in the fire levy. We promised that every cent of that money would be returned to the fire service to ensure our firefighters could carry out the vast range of services they provide to the people of Queensland. These initiatives prove we are living up to that promise.
