



Speech by

Hon. MERRI ROSE

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Hansard 27 October 1999

APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee B
Report

Hon. M. ROSE (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (3.58 p.m.): At the outset, I would like to place on record my disappointment at the appalling attack on the integrity of the Queensland Ambulance Service and the Queensland Police Service by the member for Nerang.

Mr CONNOR: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. I did not attack the police and I did not attack the Ambulance Service.

Mrs ROSE: Mr Chairman, the record will speak for itself.

Mr CONNOR: I find the remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mrs ROSE: Whatever the member finds offensive—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member has asked that the remarks be withdrawn.

Mrs ROSE: I withdraw any comment that the member finds offensive, but I place on record that I, on behalf of the Queensland Ambulance Service, am offended by his remarks in the Chamber this afternoon. I will be happy to expand on that at a later date because I want to use the time available to me now to speak about the Estimates committee.

I would like to join in thanking Estimates Committee B for its work and its report. I particularly offer my thanks to all members of the committee, and in particular to the Chairman, Pat Purcell, who, for the second successive year, did an exceptional job.

I said three weeks ago that this is an excellent budget for our emergency services and an excellent budget for Queenslanders. The non-Government committee members, by not lodging a dissenting report, obviously agree. They know what I know—that we are heading in the right direction.

The 1999 Budget delivered the second instalment of this Government's commitment to our emergency services. In just two Budgets we have injected around \$110m in new initiative funding into the portfolio; that means an even higher level of service to communities across the State. We have taken giant strides right across the portfolio—from fire, to ambulance, to the State Emergency Service and to our surf lifesavers.

Importantly, the budget also recognises the magnificent work done by almost 100,000 volunteers who are the lifeblood of communities across the State. We have 45,000 rural fire service volunteers who protect life and property in their local communities. They share a record \$6m budget. The members of the Coastguard and Volunteer Marine Rescue Association put their lives on the line to help others. As well as their annual grants, which total more than \$800,000 for each body, there is new initiative funding this year of \$1m to help them get vessels into survey so that they comply with marine safety regulations.

The surf lifesavers, who can take credit for saving well over 70,000 lives over the past 60 years, will receive a record \$3.7m as part of my department's share of the more than \$4.1m in Government funding this financial year. This will be spent on new rescue equipment, extra beach patrols, better training for volunteers and subsidies to surf clubs. There will be the expansion of the SES cadets by another five units and a commitment to continue this valuable program beyond this year when it was due to cease. Another \$500,000 is the second instalment of the SES flood boat replacement program.

I might add that this program has been applauded by the units who have benefited to date. I can vouch for the new boats, having recently helped put one through its paces on Somerset Dam.

I am proud of what we have achieved over the past 12 months. The new initiative funding has allowed us to deliver free ambulance services to up to 850,000 pensioners, Seniors Card holders and their dependants; provide additional funding to address the steep rise in urgent ambulance case load; deliver an attractive enterprise partnership agreement to our highly professional and dedicated ambulance officers; and extend services into remote areas of the State including, I am happy to say, indigenous communities.

The combination of extra ambulance officers—or as we now know them, paramedics—and intensive care paramedics, better training, new vehicles and communications upgrades will help the QAS improve even more its already impressive standard of care to Queenslanders. An injection of funds from the QFRA rescue package will help improve fire service delivery. Communities will be safer because their firefighters are better equipped to do the job. There will be 74 new urban and 124 rural fire trucks, more firefighters, better training and delivery of safety and other equipment to our permanent, auxiliary and thousands of rural volunteers.

An initiative that will bring massive long-term benefits to Queensland is our continued focus on natural disaster mitigation. The already productive partnership between local government and my department has been cemented in this Budget, with more than \$1.5m earmarked for disaster mitigation studies and management programs. Only yesterday, I had the pleasure of launching a kit to help local government undertake natural disaster mitigation planning. These kits, which will be distributed—

Time expired.
