



Speech by

**Hon. MERRI ROSE**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Hansard 11 November 1999

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Ambulance Service

**Hon. M. ROSE** (Currumbin—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (9.50 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in the House the member for Mirani launched a disgraceful attack on the Queensland Ambulance Service. He unashamedly used a 92 year old woman as a pawn in his appalling attack on the professionalism of the ambulance service. In doing so, he showed that he had no regard—no regard whatsoever—for the facts. Not only that, he made no attempt to find out the facts, even after I offered to have the incident investigated. His conduct was disgraceful. I am now in a position—

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

**Mrs ROSE:** I am now in a position where I need to set the record straight in the House. This would not have been necessary if the member for Mirani had come to see me in the first place. Unfortunately, putting the facts on the record places the woman concerned in an embarrassing position, because her comments contradict those facts. What actually happened last Saturday morning is far removed from the story peddled by the member for Mirani.

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I will be warning the Leader of the Opposition if he continues.

**Mrs ROSE:** The member asked a question about an elderly Brisbane woman who, according to the member for Mirani, was "forced to wait for three hours" and that despite "the pain and agony of her predicament that lady had to organise alternative transport to hospital". They are his words. He asked me if I would be offering an apology for what he termed "disgraceful and yet unexplained delay". The disgrace lies with the member and with those media outlets who sensationalised—

**Mr Borbidge** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition under Standing Order 123A. That is my final warning.

**Mrs ROSE:** The disgrace lies with the member and with those media outlets who sensationalised the whole episode. The facts are these. After falling at her home, the woman was driven by a neighbour to a medical centre. A broken arm was diagnosed and she was treated by a doctor. The doctor arranged for an ambulance to take her to hospital. Acting on advice from the doctor, she was classified as a Code 3—routine transport. The doctor did not consider there was an urgent need for transport.

The ambulance scheduled to take the woman to hospital was delayed after being redirected to a more urgent incident involving an injured child. The neighbours who had taken the woman to the doctor in the first place drove her home. The neighbour called the ambulance asking where the unit was and said that the woman was ready for pick-up. After being told that there would be a delay, the neighbour said that the woman would be driven to hospital by private means. The communications centre call taker advised that an ambulance could be there in 30 minutes and that the ambulance was the best way for the patient to travel to hospital. The neighbour then said that the patient was fine and had a discussion with the woman about whether they would wait for the ambulance. They said they would. They were told that contact would be made if there was a delay.

Shortly afterwards, the neighbour again called, advising that the patient was "quite all right". She said, "She's really good. She'd run rings around you and me too." Then the neighbour said, "She's laughing her head off here and her grandson's coming." The call taker was told that the grandson wanted to take the woman to hospital and that he was on his way to the house. The plan for the woman to be taken to hospital by her family was verified to the call centre duty supervisor.

The Ambulance Service's concern at all times was for the patient. They checked her condition several times to ensure it had not deteriorated. Their concern differed dramatically from that of the member, whose only concern was for his own image. He made no attempt whatsoever to ascertain the facts. He made no approach to either my office or the QAS for information. In fact, he chose to ignore a message from my office for details when I offered to have the allegation investigated—all to peddle a clearly distorted story.

This chain of events can be verified by a voice tape, and I am willing to make it available. Had he not been so intent on beating this issue up, the member for Mirani could have had the real story. Instead, he denigrated the magnificent work done by our ambos. He questioned the efficiency of the officers who transport half a million people to hospital every year. Around 130,000 of those are Code 1 emergencies.

These people save lives every single day. I do not question them. I support them and I always will. They do a magnificent job. The member for Mirani should listen to the tape. Then, if he has any honour at all he will apologise for the slur he has cast on every one of our ambo paramedics.

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