



Speech by

**Mr S. ROBERTSON**

**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

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Hansard 6 September 2000

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Fire Safety**

**Hon. S. ROBERTSON** (Sunnybank—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.10 a.m.), by leave: Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority research reveals that people living in private rental accommodation are among those Queenslanders most likely to die in a house fire. This research is backed up by the QFRA's recent community fire awareness survey, which showed that only 54% of properties being rented from a private landlord and 44% of properties rented from a real estate agent have smoke alarms installed. By comparison, the overall percentage of Queensland homes fitted with smoke alarms has risen in the past two years from 56% to almost 70%. Despite this overall increase in smoke alarm usage, private rental properties remain an area of major concern for firefighters. The research highlights that the private rental sector is lagging behind and there is a need for a concerted campaign to encourage private landlords and real estate agents to ensure smoke alarms are installed in their premises.

On Monday night, I had the pleasure of launching a new fire safety initiative from the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority that targets landlords and the real estate industry to pay more attention to fire safety issues. The initiative involves an interactive CD-ROM package designed to enhance fire safety in private rental accommodation. It will be distributed to real estate agents, property owners, tenants and other key stakeholders throughout the State. This applies to rental accommodation across the State, whether it be holiday units in Cairns or on the Gold Coast, flats in Mackay or on the Sunshine Coast or rental houses in rural and provincial communities.

The CD-ROM provides advice on installing smoke alarms; how to develop a home evacuation plan; home security versus safety; and the rights and responsibilities of tenants, property owners and real estate agents in terms of home fire safety. Property owners need to be reminded that smoke alarms are a smart investment. A smoke alarm can increase firefighters' chances of confining a fire to just one or two rooms. For owners of rental properties, it can ensure their property is back on the rental market much sooner. For tenants it can mean the difference between life and death.

A number of stakeholders collaborated on the project, including the Department of Emergency Services, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, the Emergency Services Advisory Council, the safety in residential dwellings task force, the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, the Tenants Union and the Property Owners Association of Queensland. It also reflects the changing role of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, which today focuses more and more on proactive fire prevention strategies rather than just being an organisation that reacts to fires.

In the past few years, front-line firefighters have been the driving force behind a number of highly successful fire safety and awareness campaigns. Programs such as Fire Ed, the Road Awareness and Accident Prevention Program, Seniors Fire Ed, Fight Fire Fascination and Operation Safehome have all had a positive impact on community safety. This new initiative will, I believe, not only increase fire safety awareness in the private rental sector but help save lives that may otherwise be lost in fires.

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