



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Queensland Ambulance Service

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: In December 1990, the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee of Inquiry into Ambulance Services tabled their first report in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The major recommendation of that report was for the formation of a state-wide ambulance service to be known as the Queensland Ambulance Service.

This organisation was created on 1 July 1991, drawing together 96 ambulance services around the state into a single entity. On the 10th anniversary of that event, we can now report back to the people of Queensland on how the Queensland Ambulance Service has developed and improved. Testimony to the quality of those services lies in these facts: an extraordinarily high level of satisfaction by patients—97.3 per cent; improved survival amongst critically ill patients; and formal recognition, including an Australian Quality Award. In effect, this is a report card on the recommendations of the parliamentary select committee and the subsequent action by government and the service in implementing those recommendations.

Personally, I give the Queensland Ambulance Service an A plus. I will take members through some of the reasons why. The parliamentary select committee recommended the extension of the use of defibrillation. Defibrillators are now available on all ambulance vehicles. Early defibrillation is proven to save lives. This, combined with improved response times and access to definitive advanced life support, has doubled the number of people surviving out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in Queensland in the past five years. The service provides emergency ambulance services from 252 emergency response locations throughout Queensland. The number of response locations has increased by 37 since 1991 through the construction of new stations, the taking over of Queensland Health ambulance services, and the location of ambulance crews at health or emergency service locations.

In the financial year 2000-01 the service responded to over 470,000 cases. Response times within the service are comparable to the best available in the world. The Queensland Ambulance Service reaches more than 68 per cent of all category 1 cases within 10 minutes. The service has embarked on a program of improving and modernising communication centres and the technical infrastructure that supports them. My government has done its part by providing \$15 million over five years for improved ambulance communications, including computer aided dispatch and automatic vehicle location systems. Communication centres, operating the latest world-class systems, are now in 10 centres across the state.

In 1996, the intensive care paramedic program was introduced and 137 officers have now completed the program. In 1998, the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Emergency Health Services) was launched in conjunction with the Queensland University of Technology.

The parliamentary select committee recommended that the service form community liaison committees with the role of advising the officer in charge at their local station about their communities' needs and to raise and manage funds on behalf of the local community. There are currently 176 liaison committees involving over 1,000 people across Queensland. I congratulate the men and women of those committees around Queensland for their magnificent contribution.

The Queensland Ambulance Service provides a baby capsule hire service across Queensland and has fitted about 50,000 baby capsules and 8,000 child restraints around the state over the past

decade. I ask members to think about how many young lives have been preserved and how the severity of many injuries has been reduced by this great initiative. A number of service education campaigns have raised awareness on safety issues, and no doubt saved lives and prevented injury around the state. These include Farmsafe, Older and Wiser, One Step Ahead, Drug Awareness, Needle Safe, Adopt an Ambo, and the Triple Zero Awareness programs.

The service maintains a fleet of 927 vehicles. It has undertaken an extensive program of modernisation and standardisation of this fleet over the past 10 years. My government has done its part towards this with funding of it since 1999. My government has honoured its election commitment to put Emergency Services on a solid financial footing by increasing budget funding for the Queensland Ambulance Service from \$158 million in 1997-98 to \$237 million in 2001-02. That is one and a half times what coalition governments have provided.

I congratulate Mike Reynolds, the Minister for Emergency Services, on continuing to pursue the improvements to our ambulance service which began 10 years ago. I have great confidence that, under the expert guidance of the Department of Emergency Services executive management team and the Commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service, Dr Gerry FitzGerald, the service will continue to improve and flourish and to provide a service that is second to none to the Queensland community. I table a copy of that 10-year review for the information of the House. It is titled *Queensland Ambulance Service*. The minister and I will be formally launching it later today.