



Speech by

Hon. S. ROBERTSON

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard 28 November 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fireworks Display Rules

Hon. S. ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: A tragic fireworks accident at Bray Park in May last year resulted in the death of an 11-year-old girl and serious injury to seven other people. Since then, there have been a number of fireworks mishaps around the state that have resulted in minor injuries to a few members of the public.

These incidents are simply not acceptable and that is why the Beattie government has moved to review procedures for fireworks displays. My Department of Mines has recently issued new rules for fireworks displays, which came into effect from 15 November. The new rules include: new minimum clearance distances for fireworks displays; all fireworks and equipment must be properly secure; the use of metal equipment with fireworks is prohibited; the unnecessary confinement of fireworks is prohibited; and licensed fireworks operators must use personal protective equipment at all times. As a result of these new rules, licensed operators conducting displays at some of our smaller venues may need to review the size and type of fireworks they use. I note some fireworks operators have publicly criticised these changes, claiming they will mean the end of some popular fireworks displays on the Queensland calendar. Let me make this perfectly clear: this government's first priority is the safety of the general public, and fireworks operators better get used to this.

Fireworks are not toys. They contain high-energy chemicals which burn rapidly at temperatures of up to 3000 degrees Celsius. When they are propelled from mortars or Roman candle cases, they reach initial speeds of several hundred kilometres per hour. If they malfunction or tip over, the potential for serious injury or death to the public is enormous. That is why we are insisting on a minimum clearance distance based on a one metre distance per millimetre of firework. For example, a 75 millimetre aerial shell will have a minimum clearance distance of 75 metres.

The revised minimum clearance distances were developed by my department's explosive inspectorate in consultation with a world expert in pyrotechnics, Dr Ken Kosanke of Colorado. Queensland now leads Australia in terms of explosives and fireworks safety and, following research conducted during the Bray Park investigation, leads the world in this area of public safety. My aim is to enhance the safety of both the public and fireworks operators at fireworks displays. I am confident that these new rulings will help to achieve that while still allowing fireworks displays to be an enjoyable part of festivities around the state.

As part of our commitment to improve safety for the general public at fireworks displays, I am informed that explosive inspectors have just confiscated a 20-inch container of unmarked fireworks worth approximately \$US20,000. The sale and distribution of illegal fireworks is a matter of great concern and it should be of grave concern to all members of this House. Members should be assured that my Department of Mines will continue to be vigilant in ensuring that the safety of the general public and fireworks operators is maintained over the festive season.
