



Speech by

Mr T. MALONE

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Hansard 15 April 2001

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (8.39 p.m.): On 2 May, I relayed my concerns in parliament regarding ambulance staffing levels and stated that staff funding had been reduced to the QAS south-western region. On 3 May, the minister replied by letter—

All stations continue to be appropriately staffed and the community can be fully assured that there has been no reduction in the availability of emergency responses in the South Western Region or elsewhere.

I wonder if this is really true. How can this possibly be correct when, not one day later, the ambulance officers' own union, the Ambulance Employees Association, circulated a campaign newsletter which stated, 'Enough is enough—No more band-aids for QAS'? That newsletter was sent to all its members. The union has identified an eight-point plan which identifies inadequate staffing levels, poor quality of patient care, workplace stress and organisational funding as major issues within the QAS. I wonder who is telling lies. It is either the minister or the fine officers whom he always mentions make up Australia's best Ambulance Service.

I also have an official document dated 11 April from the south-western region which raises concerns that ambulance staffing is inadequate in the bush and that the QAS can fulfil all of its community service obligations only at a personal cost to its local paramedics. It also states that the staff have raised staffing issues time and time again only to have them disregarded by QAS management. The *Courier-Mail* also seems to think there is a major problem with staffing within the QAS. Its article of 11 May even unearthed a range of statements from a QAS manager in central Queensland, which have been supported by the regional executive director, that indicate low staff numbers were causing 'significant concern'.

Within the last 12 months, the combined stations of Toowoomba and Fairview have had a reduced operational response from eight officers rostered daily on weekends to only six officers now available. The Tara and Crows Nest stations have been reduced to two officers from three, leaving only one officer to respond alone on weekends instead of two officers, with these locations being advised that the position will not be immediately replaced. The officer in charge at the mining town of Middlemount is not replaced on days off, with cover undertaken by a lone, unpaid honorary ambulance officer of lesser qualifications and experience.

When the minister said on 3 May that 'there has been absolutely no reduction in service delivery within the south-western region or elsewhere', I believe that was purely and simply a statement made to mislead this parliament and the people of Queensland on the true goings-on within the department. The union has produced a bumper sticker that depicts a bandaid across a bleeding wound on the QAS badge. I wonder if the minister would be proud to see that on cars around Queensland.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Oh come on! Stop being so negative.

Mr MALONE: That is a fact.

Time expired.
