



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 9 April 2002

ENERGEX COMMUNITY RESCUE SERVICE

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (12.19 p.m.): Today I rise to bring to the attention of the House the great work done by an exceptional community group and also a well-known Sunshine Coast community member who lives within my electorate of Kawana on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. I speak of the Queensland Energex Helicopter Rescue Service and Mr Don Moffat or, as some of us on the Sunshine Coast like to refer to him, the 'Big Don'.

Don was born in the Kingaroy area. I believe he served as an Iriquois helicopter pilot in the Vietnam conflict in the seventies. He was formerly the Chairman of Tourism Sunshine Coast. I was privileged to serve as a director on that board under Don, as I was Caloundra's representative from the council and he was one of two elected representatives from the tourism industry. Don is now the Chairman of the Energex Community Rescue Service. This rescue service is an incredible asset to our entire region. The late Des Scanlan was the former chairman and he, too, had a passion for the Sunshine Coast community. A rescue helicopter now carries his name.

Energex Community Rescue undertakes vital search, rescue and medical missions right across south-east Queensland. They are a non-profit organisation, which means they are owned by the communities they serve. They are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks in the year at no cost to patients. Last year alone they attended 549 medical call-outs, including motor vehicle, motorcycle and horse riding accidents, as well as farming, camping and surf accidents. In addition, the chopper has completed 103 tasks with the Queensland police, including the search for and apprehension of the suspect relating to the Childers backpacker hostel fire. Of the 103 tasks, there were search and rescues, including the rescue of two climbers from Mount Tibrogargan, part of the Glasshouse Mountains on the Sunshine Coast—a beautiful area of Queensland.

Since the service started more than 22 years ago, countless lives have been saved due to this rescue service. Accidents happen when and where we least expect them to, and we should realise that Energex Community Rescue is always there to help, thanks to the dedicated crew, volunteers and various medical teams. The Energex Community Rescue area extends from Brisbane to the north of Bundaberg, south as far as northern New South Wales and inland to the Darling Downs. Energex has been the rescue service's major sponsor and supporter since 1994. Over this time I believe some 6,300 rescues have been conducted, helping to save countless numbers of lives.

I draw to the attention of the House the fact that, recently, upon receiving my last Energex power bill, I did not find any mention of whether I was still a contributor to this well respected and utilised helicopter rescue service. I would encourage all community members and honourable members to be contributors. I called the bill information phone number. Having changed my residential address in the middle of last year, I needed to change my power connection and billing details. I was advised that, yes, I had previously been contributing through my power bill. However, possibly through human error during the changeover, my contribution was not automatically switched over. Therefore, I suggest that all Energex customers be subscribers and check their bills and financial commitment to the Energex Community Rescue Service—\$2 per bill, or per quarter, which adds up to \$8 per year. That is money well spent within our community. A better process perhaps would be for all Energex consumers, excluding pensioners, to be levied unless they specifically request not to give that \$2 per quarter. Although I might cop criticism for this suggestion, I sincerely believe that the Energex Community Rescue Service is deserving of our society's commitment.

On 23 March at the Maroochy airport I attended the Energex rescue reunion, which brought together crew and volunteers with people they have helped in the past. The celebration included tours of the hanger and chopper. Also, I will mention that one of its extraordinary former patients, Pam Meacle, undertook a walk up Mount Emu to help raise awareness of the service. Ten years ago, on 21 March 1992, Pam was halfway across a pedestrian crossing on Aerodrome Road, Maroochydore, when she was hit by a four-wheel-drive. She suffered devastating injuries.

Time expired.
