



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 6 November 2002

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.11 p.m.): Naturally, I, too, support this Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill. I must mention the gratitude Sunshine Coast residents and the community have for emergency services workers, whether they be paid or volunteer workers. They do a great job that we do acknowledge. Substantial improvements to all state emergency services have been achieved under the Beattie Labor government. I believe that we as the elected government must continue to be proactive in improving emergency services right across this great state of Queensland. We are a government that consults. The main part of any government's consultation is to listen, analyse the issue and act where necessary and, obviously where possible, within relevant budgetary constraints. It is extremely easy for promises to be made by those not in government, but my community and probably the vast majority of Queenslanders realise that this empty rhetoric is normally unfunded and that these empty political promises are an easy and glib attempt to make media headlines to get on the evening news. Queenslanders are smart enough to see through small-minded political point scoring. We should be proud not only of this minister but previous Labor emergency services ministers who still remain in cabinet now presiding over other portfolios.

The Beattie government does not come out shooting from the hip when issues arise. We are determined to have well-planned, thought out and clearly documented strategies that are adopted and set in place to properly address the needs of our residents. Emergency services on the Sunshine Coast have come along way under the Beattie government. I will continue to ensure that concerned employees, volunteers and constituents' problems are properly identified. The minister, upon taking over this very important portfolio, was quick to answer my request to visit the Sunshine Coast, and I sincerely thank him for that. During that visit in April last year we officiated at a brick laying ceremony of the Queensland Ambulance Service, Sunshine Coast Communications Centre, at the Maroochydore emergency services complex where the minister and I learnt that our previous lives were definitely not as brick layers. We also visited the old tollway building on the Sunshine Coast Motorway, now the state emergency services base, and presented a \$20,000 cheque to the state emergency services controller. We then popped over to the Kawana QAS station at Buddina and also visited the auxiliary Queensland fire and rescue station, also a fire communications centre, on the Nicklin Way at Warana. We also ventured to the Caloundra station and also visited the QFRA station in the industrial estate and the QAS at the regional office right next door.

As a son of a defence force fireman who proudly served for over two-and-a-half decades, I have always had a very good insight into the life of an emergency services worker, albeit in the Royal Australian Air Force. I am aware of the shift work, the hours, the injuries and the possible dangers that they face. I am proud to say that I also established good, long-term friendships with numerous hard working and dedicated emergency services workers. In fact, both the best man and groomsman at my wedding work on the Gold Coast as paramedics on the RACQ Careflight helicopter. Peter Caffrey and Stephen Robinson are two hardworking, dedicated and proud career-orientated paramedics who are a great credit to the system they have progressed through. The system is what we know as the QAS. They are but two of tens of thousands of emergency service workers across the state dedicated to serving not only their fellow Queenslanders but visitors that we host to this great state. Local ambulance committees are very important to the very fabric of an efficient ambulance service.

The Buderim local ambulance committee is very well appreciated in our community on the Sunshine Coast. I must make mention of the president, Beres Howard OAM. Beres recently received this well deserved award. The vice-president is Ian Moffett. The honorary secretary is Grace McLuskie-Higgs and the honorary treasurer is Hugh Johnson. They have raised concerns with me over a period of time which I have taken up with the minister, including the administration of the subscription scheme by private health funds. They also suggested a possible pensioner rate instead of free ambulance subscription. I do not necessarily agree with it, but I have taken on board their concerns. They have also raised issues about whether or not Energex bills have a levy on them. I have received them in a democratic way and passed them on to the minister. I will also formally address them.

The new Buderim Ambulance Station that the minister recently opened is part of a major initiative to enhance ambulance resources on the Sunshine Coast. It is keeping pace with the ambulance service demands of this rapidly growing and dynamic community. Until recently, the condition and location of a number of ambulance stations on the Sunshine Coast was inconsistent with providing high quality ambulance services and short response times. As a result of this initiative, ambulance stations at Maroochydore, Nambour and Buderim have been upgraded and relocated to stations with quick access to the major arterial roads such as the Bruce Highway and the Sunshine Motorway. The new Buderim Ambulance Station is located on the western side of Buderim and provides coverage to growing communities such as Chancellor Park as well as easy access to the entire Buderim area, Bruce Highway and the Sunshine Motorway.

As an elected representative, I once again sincerely thank all the Sunshine Coast LACs on behalf of our community. Not only are they very active with fundraising and assistance offered, but the Buderim ambulance personnel are committed to raising issues of concern with me. The Kawana LAC is an active and positive group that ensures that vitally needed extras are sourced through fundraising initiatives that they continue to pursue. They support and have supported the Kawana ambulance for many years. Kawana residents are indeed grateful to those involved. They do a superb job. I sincerely thank them for their well-appreciated community service, and they include: William Lind-Hansen, president; vice-president, Jean LeBrocq; secretary, Margo Lind-Hansen; treasurer, Lisa Manly; Else Rasmussen, Joan Chaplain and Joanne Berkline. I do realise that the office bearer elections are not due until August next year and that they have two-year terms.

The current ambulance station at Kawana was built in 1982 on land partially donated by the Kawana Waters estate. The station was upgraded in 1999 to provide improved facilities for additional staff. In the longer term, the QAS will continue to monitor trends and patterns in growth around the area and service demands to assess the ongoing suitability of the current service delivery model for the Kawana area.

Since coming to power in 1998, the Beattie government has provided significant additional funding to improve emergency services to the communities on the Sunshine Coast. Funding has provided staffing increases for three officers at Beerwah, four at Kawana and two at Cooroy Ambulance Stations, which have been upgraded to operate with a dedicated two-officer crew 24 hours each day, as opposed to the previous single-officer day station response.

In addition to these upgrades, the Beattie government has created a new station at Tewantin at a cost of \$558,000 to service the ongoing growth within that community. The Sunshine Coast communications centre has been upgraded and fitted out with a state-of-the-art computer-aided dispatch—CAD—system, including automatic vehicle location, or AV, which provides comprehensive geographical and incident information, such as the type and location of the emergency and the nearest available ambulance resources.

There are also four additional patient transport crews, bringing the total to seven, to provide a separate non-urgent clinic transport system to better service the Sunshine Coast and surrounding communities. This also has the added benefit of allowing emergency crews to be freed up to provide emergency care, improving response times and saving lives.

Since July 1998, 56 operational ambulances out of 108—52 per cent—have been replaced with new vehicles, and this has resulted in a more modern fleet for the Sunshine Coast. The new vehicles have been primarily the new F series Mercedes Sprinter and specialised patient transport vehicles. Under the Beattie Labor government, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has received funding amounting to \$95,000, which has been provided for the purchase of land at Mooloolah. A new fire station will also be built at Mooloolah to replace the existing outdated building. The north coast region emergency call-taking communications centre is located at the Kawana Fire Station on the Nicklin Way and was upgraded at a cost of approximately \$144,800.

The Maroochydore Fire Station was relocated at a cost of just under \$2 million to a position that provides greatly improved service delivery throughout the Sunshine Coast. The Maroochydore Fire Station is strategically placed and provides a range of enhanced services to growth areas throughout the central Sunshine Coast. Likewise, the Caloundra Fire Station was relocated at a cost of just under

\$1.2 million to a position that provides improved service delivery and capability. Both of these stations service, indeed overlap, my electorate.

The Sunshine Coast is a high-growth area. Both Caloundra and Maroochydore are strategically located to enhance service delivery in the community. The fire service is currently preparing service delivery plans in anticipation of fire services required to meet population growth forecasts. A mobile training unit with the capacity to provide training in the use of breathing apparatus equipment and practical gas fire training has been provided to the Kawana and Sunshine Coast area. A module of this mobile training unit features a 3D cinema that presents fire safety messages to the community and is a highly regarded initiative. I commend the minister for this. I have sat through the *Blazer the bear* show with my wife and three-and-a-half-year-old son, Daniel, who is a fireman and fire vehicle nut. They are very good educational tools addressing 'look, listen and roll' and all of the other things we should learn in terms of fire safety around the home.

The cost of the unit exceeded \$350,000. A mechanical workshop and associated facilities have also been provided at the Caloundra Fire Station, costing over \$80,000. There have been 12 rural firefighting appliances allocated to rural fire brigades in the Sunshine Coast area, at a cost totalling approximately \$600,000. Pumper tankers have been allocated to Nambour, Caloundra, Mooloolah, Beerwah, Coolumb, Buderim, Cooroy, Pomona and Maleny urban fire stations at a total cost of approximately \$2.25 million. The Kawana fire appliance was also upgraded recently at a cost of approximately \$300,000. Additionally, three new state-of-the-art SCANIA fire appliances have been allocated to Noosa, Maroochydore and up north to Bundaberg, at a cost of \$1.65 million.

In the area of counter-disaster services, the state Department of Emergency Services provides funding for disaster mitigation, chemical hazards and emergency management, aviation services, volunteer marine rescue services and the State Emergency Service. Since the Beattie Labor government has come into power, we have committed funds for counter-disaster and rescue services on the Sunshine Coast in excess of \$874,000. Again, I thank the minister and his cabinet colleagues for allocating those funds to the Sunshine Coast.

The Department of Emergency Services administers the Natural Disaster Risk Management Study program, which assists local governments in identifying risks and potential mitigation measures to reduce the impact of natural disasters. In the Sunshine Coast area a total \$746,000 has been committed towards these study programs. The department has also committed funds for grants and subsidies for SES units in the Sunshine Coast area in excess of \$127,000. A base grant of \$3,000 is provided to all local governments annually to assist in defraying administration and operational costs associated with operating the SES units. In the Sunshine coast area, since 1998 annual grants have totalled \$55,000.

The Department of Emergency Services also provides a study program which local governments can access for accommodation, motor vehicles and office equipment for the State Emergency Service. Again, funds committed to the Sunshine Coast area since 1998 are in excess of \$72,000. In addition to the payment of these grants and subsidies, SES units and groups throughout Queensland also receive support by way of the provision of major rescue equipment and personal protective equipment, including overalls, wet weather gear, boots, hats, flood boats, road accident and vertical rescue equipment. The department, through the Volunteer Marine Rescue Program, provides recurrent funding to the Australian Volunteer Coastguard Association, the Surf Life Saving Association and the Royal Life Saving Society of Queensland. The financial grants to the AVCGA flotillas are managed by the AVCGA State Council in accordance with a service agreement and include an operational grant to the maximum of \$20,000 based on the previous year's audited financial report submitted by the flotilla, and a vehicle replacement grant of up to a maximum of \$100,000. In addition, each flotilla receives financial support to maintain its vessels in commercial survey. The actual benefit will vary from year to year according to the actual need. The Department of Emergency Services also provides \$30,000 annually to assist the association with the provision of common law liability insurance and the department provides other forms of support to the association and will continue to provide this support. This is highly appreciated on the Sunshine Coast, given the number of people who enjoy boating and other pastimes.

The department is providing financial assistance to Surf Life Saving Queensland's State Centre of over \$1.6 million in this financial year and over \$20,000 directly to each of the 57 accredited surf clubs and six branches in the state, in accordance with the DES-Surf Life Saving Queensland Service Agreement. The funding for the state centre includes over a quarter of a million as an ongoing entitlement towards WorkCover premiums. Funds are to be directed to the following services—beach patrol, surveillance and rescue services, public awareness and education, training of personnel, equipment and administrative support.

I must mention all of these figures, because the Sunshine Coast is highly reliant on tourism. Not only the locals but also the visitors to the area are highly reliant on emergency services and the funding that we provide to these volunteer organisations. It is highly appreciated. The department also provides

financial assistance of approximately \$24,000 to the Royal Life Saving Society club at Bulcock Beach, Caloundra, for the provision of beach safety services in accordance again with the Department of Emergency Services and Royal Life Saving Queensland Service Agreement.

Mr Reeves: They need it there with that tide going out.

Mr CUMMINS: They certainly do. As the member rightly interjects, the Pumicestone Passage is tidal. I class myself as a reasonable swimmer, but I would not want to get caught in it. Over the years, porpoises and so on used to be seen there. It is a very scenic area and one that needs to be patrolled. The department also provides payment for WorkCover insurance premiums for the active lifesavers of the club.

The national medal was first instituted in 1975 for persons performing 15 years of diligent service. After that, a clasp is available for 10 years' further service. Recently the minister was on the Sunshine Coast to present Noel Burgess, Darryn Camm, Mark Campbell, Dale Diefenbach, Jeffrey Keating, Bryan O'Neill, Mark Revell, Gregory Scarlett, Ross Anderson and Philip Butler with their medals. We also received a Scania Type 4 appliance for Maroochydore and the Isuzu pumper tanker for Kawana. Neil Gallant, the area director for Maroochydore, along with Reg Christiansen, the assistant commissioner for the QFRS of the North Coast Region were also on hand. I thank the minister for the good work that both he and his department are doing. I commend the bill to the House.