



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard 6 November 2002

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (4.44 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise to participate in this debate on the Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill which will streamline the operation of the state's 175 local ambulance committees. These changes arise from an extensive review process amongst local ambulance committee members which started in 1997. The changes also have the support of the Ambulance Commissioner's Local Ambulance Committee Reference Group, which comprises 14 LAC representatives, of whom I am one. I take this opportunity to commend Commissioner Dr Gerry FitzGerald for his valuable work with the Ambulance Service and understand Dr FitzGerald is moving on to greater things in the Health Department. I congratulate him and look forward to his continuing good work for the government of Queensland within Queensland Health.

The Beattie government greatly values and appreciates the local ambulance committee network and will continue to encourage it and support it. I am involved in the LAC community, having been a member of my own local ambulance committee for a number of years. I am not a hardworking member of that committee because I find it very difficult to get to meetings, but today I take this opportunity to recognise the people on that committee and to speak briefly about them. Our president, Warren Mitchell, and his wife, June, have been members for very many years. They go back to QATB days and have worked unceasingly for the ambulance committee in Charters Towers. Our secretary is John Stibbs, who is a tower of strength to us all, and our treasurer is Bruce Drury. I remember being told once when I was treasurer of a committee that I was only there to tell them what money they did not have. Well, Bruce is there to tell us what money we do not have. Lyn Wills is another member. Lyn replaced her late husband on the committee and continues his good work. Another committee member is Tim Archer, who tells us all that he is there to disprove the theory that the baddies wear the black hats.

Our local ambulance committees provide a critical link between the community and ambulance service operations. They provide community feedback and support local stations. In the past two years local ambulance committees have provided approximately \$1.48 million to the Queensland Ambulance Service to support the delivery of ambulance services. All 175 committees currently operate under constitutions that have previously been the subject of ministerial approval. This bill establishes a mechanism to replace existing constitutions with the new model constitution and also makes administrative changes which will result in a more efficient administration of local ambulance committees.

Local ambulance committees would never work without the support of the staff members at the local stations. We are fortunate indeed to have as our OIC Clark Magele, who is a gentleman and a diplomat. He also represents our QAS on the local health committee. I know that relationships between the ambulance and the local hospital have been greatly enhanced by Clark's presence on that committee. I am deeply envious of Clarke in that his wife looks as if she is one of their older children. We cannot believe this lady is actually old enough to have all those good looking children. We also have Brendan Hall, a former OIC, who always introduces himself as Ben Hall. I do not know quite what to think about that since Ben Hall was a well-known bushranger, but anything Ben does is fine with me.

Scott Fry is always available to help on any occasion. Recently we needed a couple of hundred ambulance pamphlets to put in show bags to encourage people to subscribe to their local ambulance, and Scott made sure they arrived on time.

Jim Bliss has been a member of the QAS in Charters Towers for many years who spent some time in Clermont and then came back to us. He and his wife, Fay, have a grandchild these days who they are busily spoiling. Doug Snell is from the QATB days. I hope Doug is glad he no longer has to sell raffle tickets up the street to make his wages because he is the corporate memory of our station.

David Lowe is another member of the staff. He is a man of some literary ambition. Our community has been both refreshed and challenged by David's unique point of view in our local press of recent times. I thank David for his support. I wish him good luck with his literary aspirations and look forward to many more of his humorous letters to the editor. Three of our other hardworking staff members are Shane Mahoney, Alivin Webster and John Suringa.

The amendments to this bill will also increase the maximum membership limit for LACs from nine to 15, with an increase beyond 15 allowed if the minister considers it necessary to ensure adequate community representation. The amendments will also allow committee members to be drawn from subscription scheme subscribers in the general public, rather than exclusively from community organisations. The bill also puts beyond doubt the ability of the minister to dismiss a committee member where it is in the public interest to do so.

There is no doubt this bill will improve the administration of the local ambulance committees. Speaking as a long-term member of both my local ambulance committee and the commissioner's reference group, I believe this has been long overdue and will mean a more streamlined and effective structure to work within. I congratulate all LAC and emergency services workers over the length and breadth of Queensland on the good work they do in helping to keep us all safe and commend this bill to the House.