



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 31 October 2002

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (5.26 p.m.): There is little of more importance than our emergency services. This government takes very seriously the responsibility of providing those services. It is essential both to provide world-class services to Queensland residents and to support the people who work at the coalface in this difficult industry.

Providing for outstanding emergency services in Queensland is no mean feat. The wide expanse of the state combined with unforgiving terrain and extreme temperatures make it a challenging and difficult proposition. Providing appropriate working conditions and administration across the state is also a challenge.

One of the wonderful things about emergency services in Queensland is the extent of volunteer involvement. A way in which communities can become involved in their local services is through the local ambulance committees. This bill makes a number of amendments which relate directly to improving the operations of the local ambulance committees.

LACs are made up of members of the community who take an active interest in the provision of ambulance services in their community. They have the responsibility of liaising between the community and the Queensland Ambulance Service, and they play a very important part in fundraising for the local services and managing the money then held in trust. They also have a responsibility in raising the profile of the Ambulance Service and promoting participation in emergency services. I am fortunate in my area to have an excellent LAC. I have been welcomed at the meetings of the Coolangatta-Burleigh Heads local ambulance committee and have been extremely impressed at their dedication to the local community and to the Ambulance Service.

This bill also amends provisions relating to disaster management. Disaster relief is a measure which is necessary all too often in Queensland. It is extremely important and extremely difficult to coordinate efforts, especially in remote communities. To address this issue, the Emergency Services Advisory Council will have two additional members, one Aboriginal and one Torres Strait Islander community representative.

This bill also amends section 8B of the Fire Act, which establishes the functions of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. The amendments relate specifically to hazardous material emergencies—an unfortunate necessity in this post September 11 world. I congratulate the minister and his staff on their work on this amendment. It is a job well done.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Queensland Ambulance Service on its 110th anniversary, which was celebrated in September. The length of service is put into perspective when one recognises that the Ambulance Service has been operating since before Australian Federation and has continued through all the ups and downs of our wonderful state. I commend this bill to the House.