



Speech by

Hon. GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workplace Health and Safety Innovation Awards; Boarding House Fire, Sandgate

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.13 a.m.), by leave: This government is actively encouraging all employers and workers to find better and safer ways in which to work. That is why, for the second year running, we are offering companies and workers the chance to be recognised for their efforts in helping to reduce deaths and injuries in workplaces around Queensland.

The Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Innovation Awards recognise companies and employees who have developed new equipment, a new system, a new technology and even new training courses that are helping to address hazards in the workplace and, in doing so, improve business productivity. I am happy to report that there was an outstanding response to these awards last year from companies and workers keen to showcase their safety innovations across the state. Award winners and finalists in 2001 included companies from Rockhampton, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and Brisbane—for innovations ranging from a new harvesting system, new emergency evacuation policies, and even a public safety campaign.

Following on from the Emergency Services Minister, and as member for Sandgate, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the emergency workers involved in Sunday night's boarding house fire. Sandgate is a very close-knit community where residents are renowned for pulling together to help each other in times of adversity, and the past two days have been no exception. Shortly after the fire broke out, 52 residents were evacuated from their homes in both Second and Third Avenues. In what was a major police operation, those residents were transported to the Sandgate Police Citizens Youth Club with the assistance of buses from the police club and the Sandgate RSL. Behind the scenes, police, workers and volunteers helped provide those residents with blankets and food at the youth club until 4 o'clock. Monday morning. Later in the night, those people left homeless as a result of the fire were also evacuated and cared for, and provided with accommodation at the Salvation Army at Pindari at Spring Hill.

I would like to personally thank all those people who assisted and cared for all those residents in what was a tragic and terrifying time for emergency workers and the residents of Sandgate. I visited the site of the fire yesterday with the Minister for Emergency Services. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service did a wonderful job to contain the fire and prevent any further loss of life. Those fire crews risked their lives to assist about 10 people to escape the boarding house at the rear, and several other residents from neighbouring properties. The timber homes in that area are very close together, and it unnerves me to think how easily and quickly this incident could have been much worse for the people of Sandgate and Queensland.

I believe I speak on behalf of all honourable members in the House today in offering my condolences to the families and friends of the three people who lost their lives in Sunday's fire. In the meantime, to the residents of Sandgate I say: thankyou for your continued efforts to support one another through this terrible time.
