



Speech by

JO-ANN MILLER

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (12.43 a.m.): What a hard act to follow, especially at this early hour of the morning. I rise in support of the Community Ambulance Cover Bill. If business was exempted from paying the community ambulance cover on their electricity accounts it would mean residents would then have to pay around \$100 rather than \$88 per year. The federal, state and local governments levy taxes on businesses and individuals to fund the provision of services to the community. For example, federal company tax and state payroll tax provide funds for public health and public education. Businesses also pay local rates bills which contribute to the provision of services in their local government areas. The ambulance levy will also contribute to the provision of services to the community. All of the dollars raised will be used to provide a world-class Ambulance Service. The vast bulk of the revenue from the community ambulance cover charge will be raised from individuals. In fact, it is estimated that around 90 per cent of the revenue raised will be paid by households. The changes announced recently to the community ambulance cover are expected to reduce the amount collected by the state government by around \$4 million to \$5 million. Businesses will be the main beneficiary of these modifications through the change to introduce one bill per building per business.

Community ambulance cover is a relatively modest impost. As a business expense it should be tax deductible. At \$88 per annum, the community ambulance cover is in stark contrast to tax increases imposed by the federal government. I think it is about time we in this House got real about what in fact the community ambulance cover costs. It is equivalent to a chocolate frog per day. That is what it is equivalent to—that is, a chocolate frog per day or it is equivalent per week to two packets of Fruit Tingles. That is what it is equivalent to. I want the morons over there on the other side to get real about this and how mean is business—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McNamara): Order! I just reminded one honourable member about unparliamentary language and I would ask the honourable member for Bundamba to respect the same rules.

Mrs MILLER: I respect that, Mr Deputy Speaker. Can I just say how mean business is, especially big business, to begrudge the Ambulance Service the equivalent of a chocolate frog per day. Let us just say that whilst big business is wolfing down its corporate lunches and wolfing down its corporate dinners costing thousands of dollars every week—tens of thousands of dollars per year—I want everyone in Queensland to remember that they deny the Queensland Ambulance Service the equivalent of a chocolate frog per day. How miserable and mean can you be? The community ambulance cover will ensure that the Queensland Ambulance Service has a rock solid funding base for the first time in its 109-year history. We want a world-class Ambulance Service. I have to say that the Redbank ambulance officers are absolutely brilliant. In Ipswich our coalminers have had a levy for decades that supported the Ipswich Ambulance Service. Our coalminers were proud members of their union and they were also proud supporters of the Queensland Ambulance Service.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Are they happy with the levy?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, the miners are happy with the levy because they paid the levy decades ago. Vera Eustace and my mother Edith Pringle and all their friends fundraised for the Redbank Ambulance Service over decades. Do members know what they say to me? They say to me that the days of the chook raffles, the days of rattling the tin cans have got to be over. They were sick of begging and they

were sick of going around the community to raise money for the Ambulance Service. It is about time businesses stopped whingeing and stopped being so mean spirited. It is just an absolute disgrace.

I have had about a dozen phone calls in my electorate and a couple of letters, because my constituents are supportive of the levy. They think that it is a good idea. Our local businesses also support the Redbank Ambulance Service and support the Queensland Ambulance Service in general. Some have also donated equipment over many years. Only recently at a meeting held in our community to talk about the new Redbank Ambulance Station, Australian Meat Holdings, Redbank Plaza and Queensland Rail joined with our community members to support the construction of a new station. They are good, supportive corporate citizens. They are not the types of businesses that swan around on Eagle Street and also parade around the place because they are ashamed to contribute a chocolate frog a day. Shame on these big businesses and shame on the opposition! I am proud to be a Labor member in this House and to support this bill.