



Speech by

**Pat Purcell**

**MEMBER FOR BULIMBA**

Hansard Wednesday, 6 October 2004

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## **COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr PURCELL** (Bulimba—ALP) (12.00 p.m.): I rise to support the Community Ambulance Cover Amendment Bill. I want to make a couple comments on the speech made by the member for Nicklin. Obviously the policy we had in regard to pensioners has been changed. There was an occasion in Oxford Street in my electorate where a lady collapsed and an ambulance was called. The ambulance officers told me that as long as she was a pensioner they did not care what state she came from; they would treat her for nothing, and they did. They took her to hospital for observation. I hope I am not giving up my ambulance officers.

**Mr Wellington:** I think you might be, Pat.

**Mr PURCELL:** We have changed some things there. Ambulance service is also free for Queenslanders, of course, when they go interstate. The other thing I will say to the member for Nicklin is that a lot of members on both sides of the House agree that we should be doing this like Medicare—on a universal basis, with a fraction of a per cent collected by the federal government being given back to the states which would cover everybody—and then we would not be having this argument and the problems we have now. We just need a federal government that will do that, and this government at the moment will not do that. It is one of the things—

**Mr Shine** interjected.

**Mr PURCELL:** I know Latham will do that. It is one of the bugbears that gets under my skin. I will talk about my local ambulance committee shortly. Because of the service ambulances give—particularly officers in stations—a lot of people donate and give support to that ambulance. That has been a tradition in Australia for many, many years. People cannot get a tax deduction for giving money to the Ambulance Service because it is a government body, therefore we do not encourage people to support the ambulance with money. I do not think it would hurt the federal government to make donations to the Ambulance Service through local ambulance committees tax deductible. I think a lot more money would flow into the Ambulance Service that way.

I now turn to the bill. I do not think there is a Queenslanders who does not know what the community ambulance cover is. It has been a widely discussed and debated issue, and one that affects all Queenslanders. It has had its own teething problems. This legislation provides additional exemptions from the community ambulance cover levy. These exemptions were announced late last year, and they have been operating on an administrative basis ever since. This is really a tidying up of that.

Everybody in this place agrees that we need a properly resourced Ambulance Service and an Ambulance Service that gives prompt attention and saves lives. The fact is that we have come from a district based ambulance. It is sad, isn't it, that I have been in this place long enough to remember that! Until the Labor Party came into power in Queensland, people received as good a service as the people in their district gave to their Ambulance Service. That is why our local ambulance committees came about. Some services, particularly where I was in country areas, were appalling. The service was relying on people giving donations, but now this is a state based funded service it has to be funded correctly, and this is one way we are going about doing that.

I would also like to speak about my LAC, the Balmoral and District Ambulance Committee. I particularly point out two people on that committee who work very hard. They are a husband and wife team, Brian and Barbara Daley. Brian is the president of the Balmoral and District Ambulance Committee. Brian is a very conscientious president. He takes the job of raising funds for the ambulance for people in his area very seriously. He is a very, very good listening post for the community. People in the community approach Brian with any concerns that they may have about ambulances. He takes them on board and he takes it up with the Ambulance Service on their behalf. When seminars are put on—usually once a year—for local ambulance committees to come together to put their opinions forward about matters to do with the Ambulance Service Brian has always attended them in his own time. He is an exemplary person in our community who really cares for people. He is working very hard for all of us on the local ambulance committee.

His wife, Barbara, is the secretary. For the people who know Barbara, she is very, very efficient at what she does. Barbara is the driver of the fundraising for the local ambulance committee. She works up the rosters for us all to do our time selling raffle tickets at shopping centres and so forth. It is through Brian and Barbara's efforts—and, of course, the rest of the committee—that the local Balmoral and District Ambulance Committee has raised over \$100,000 in about a 10-year period. That is no mean feat when members think that is about \$10,000 a year.

I wish to thank Brian and Barbara Daley, Bill Appleby—who has not been in real good health of late and recently sadly lost his wife, and who has been our treasurer and a hardworking member for many years—Dawson Corrigan, Trevor Lawson, Caroline Williams, Vince Ford, Robyn O'Toole, Denise O'Shay, Jan Prasecki, Ernie Adsett and Shayne Sutton, who has just come on to the committee. She is our local councillor for Morningside. Shayne is working very hard for the community; she has hit the ground running. Shayne finds time in her very busy schedule to come along to our ambulance committee meetings once a month. I congratulate all those people on our local ambulance committee for the very hard work that they do and will continue to do.

The other people in the equation are the Balmoral and district ambulance officers. They are dedicated, hardworking and very, very professional officers looking after people in the area of Bulimba and its surrounds. I thank them on behalf of our community. I get mail and calls into my office. Politicians would realise that we do not often get pats on the back in our job, but we get a number of them through the Ambulance Service. It is because of the hard work and dedication of these officers that we get those. We get donations because of the ambulance officers—because of what they do and how they look after people.

On behalf of the community in the Balmoral and district area and on behalf of the LAC I thank those officers for all the hard work they do and ask them to continue to do it. I know a lot of them have upgraded themselves to paramedics so they can take care of every patient's needs. It is a fact of life that more and more people get to hospital alive because of our ambulance officers and the hard work they do. That is what the Ambulance Service is about. I hear members from the opposition talk about various aspects of the Ambulance Service and what it does, but I can assure those members that when they need an ambulance it is going to be there, and those officers will do everything humanly possible to get them to hospital alive. If members talk to the nurses and doctors in the emergency departments and in the hospitals they are saying that people are getting there alive, they are getting there in better condition and they are getting there in a condition where they can be saved because of the work of the ambulance officers who are getting them there as fast as they possibly can. I support the bill.