



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Emergency Services

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 am): The member for Chatsworth is at it again. After spreading misinformation in the media over the Christmas holidays about emergency services, he has repeated his efforts in his local newsletter. At least he is sure of getting a run in his local newsletter: he is the editor of his local newsletter. But, seriously, I was saddened to see that he was so far off the mark. He claimed that the fire service is not keeping up with the population growth and that we have had no new firefighters join the service. For starters, it is the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. At the very least he could get the title right when he is bashing our hardworking emergency service crews.

Our fire crews, along with the QAS, attend up to 10,000 accidents on Queensland roads, and the rescue part of their service is something they are very proud of and very good at—and firefighters get it right. I have had the pleasure to attend the firefighters graduation ceremony at the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy at Whyte Island. A total of 37 new fires have graduated since I became the minister last July, and there are another 25 recruits training right now. The member for Chatsworth claimed that there were 1,962 firefighters in 1998 but in fact there were 2,051. He mislaid 89 firefighters. He claimed that there were 1,875 in 2004 when in fact there were 2,189.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth!

Mr PURCELL: I do not know where he is getting his figures from.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth!

Mr PURCELL: It is in relation to the administrative staff numbers that the member for Chatsworth really needs to dive for the calculator, or perhaps he should take his shoes and socks off so he can count past 10. He said that there were 287 administrative staff in the fire service in 1998. Again, this figure is not right. The annual report for 1997-98, when the coalition government was in power, showed that there were 297 support staff.

Mr Caltabiano interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Chatsworth, I warn you under standing order 253.

Mr PURCELL: It is unknown who was included in this figure because the breakdown of the staff was not shown. So what the member for Chatsworth has done is use very dodgy figures from the coalition government's rubbery figures in 1998. The member for Chatsworth claims that there were 934 admin staff in 2004. The annual report for 2004-05 clearly shows 620 support staff. Under the Beattie government, we are transparent in our figures. The 2004-05 total includes maintenance staff, communications staff, admin staff plus the corporate services allocation staff. Maybe if we do not repair our trucks, we do not do any

maintenance on our buildings, we do not have any communications at all, we do not talk to one another, we do not recruit and train people and we do not pay our staff we would not need them, either.

The member for Chatsworth is trying to put our hardworking firefighters down. We all know that Queensland has a booming population, but the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service continues to meet its targets. Fires still attend 90 per cent of responses to structural fires within the urban levy boundary within 14 minutes, and this is a great effort. I would like to thank all the fires who turned up at Roma on the weekend to take part in the south-west regional firefighting championships. There were rural fire services and auxiliary fire services competing, and they had a great time while improving their skills at the same time. I would also like to thank the families of all our fires for the great support of their loved ones to enable them to train and compete over the weekend.