



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Wednesday, 7 June 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fire Safety

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.10 am): In the last few days we have had a tragic reminder of the danger of fire. Since Friday night there have been no fewer than five house fires around the state. Sadly, this morning Commissioner Lee Johnson rang me to tell me of a fire and death on the Gold Coast, on the 8th floor of an apartment block at Burleigh, although he said that that death was not caused by the fire. Unfortunately, on Friday night one woman was killed when her house caught alight. On Saturday, the town of Cooyar, north of Toowoomba, was placed on standby to evacuate because of bushfires. These events are a reminder of the importance of residents and communities ensuring they help prevent fires. First and foremost, residents should ensure that they have smoke alarms with working batteries. The message is very simple: smoke alarms save lives. I repeat: smoke alarms save lives.

South-eastern Queensland is again moving into bushfire season. Late last week there were 35 fires around Queensland, including the blaze at Cooyar. It would be easy to think of fires as unavoidable. However, as part of its commitment to creating safer communities, the Beattie government is getting on with the job of fire awareness and preparation. The Rural Fire Service is working to engage water-bombing aircraft earlier than usual to provide even greater support to combat fires.

The Beattie government also has the iZone initiative. This program aims to boost fire awareness in the fire hotspot zones where urban and rural areas meet at the fringes of cities. Queensland's success in this area was highlighted at a conference that started last night here in Brisbane. Also, the government has the ongoing Bushfire Prepared Communities Program—a partnership between emergency services, local government, communities and residents. These two programs have made Queensland a leader in bushfire management. Meanwhile, currently before the House is legislation that will make smoke alarms mandatory in all homes.

I would like to pay tribute to the state's full-time, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters. These men and women do a great job of keeping their communities safe. I am sure I speak for all of the honourable members here when I thank them for their ongoing dedication. As yesterday's budget showed, this government is getting on with the job of backing the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. With record funding, new vehicles and equipment, and particularly 23 new rural fire operations personnel, the Beattie government continues to support the state's firefighters.

Tabled paper: Copy of ministerial statement by Hon. P Purcell titled 'Fire Preparedness'.