



Speech by

**Ray Hopper**

**MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS**

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## **TRAFFIC CONTROL CERTIFICATES**

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (5.02 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House details of my concern about the outrageous charges being levied against rural fire brigades in respect of the government's requirement for all volunteers to obtain a traffic control certificate. I was recently contacted by a constituent who is appalled at the cost involved in gaining these certificates for his particular rural fire brigade. My constituent was quoted the cost of gaining an emergency control certificate at \$99 per person and for a Main Road's certificate it is \$74.15 per person, plus travel costs of 85 cents per kilometre which equates to \$200 in this particular instance. The total cost to obtain the necessary certificates for 10 volunteers would cost this rural fire brigade \$1,931.50.

It is not only rural fire brigades that need to obtain these certificates; it is also a requirement for SES members. Here we are calling on these volunteers to help us in our time of need and the next moment we are charging them for a certificate to allow them to do their job. How ironic is that. Help me and I will charge you. These volunteers are heroes and the government is treating them with disrespect. The government should be providing these certificates at no cost to them and out of gratefulness for the job they undertake.

Only last weekend, 3 June, this particular rural fire brigade was called to assist in the control of a fierce bushfire, which was rapidly approaching a town boundary. Without a moment's hesitation these volunteers were on hand and subsequently saved this small rural township, which was about to face evacuation. This was a mighty effort considering this blaze had already burnt out 50 hectares of bushland and jumped the New England Highway. These volunteers do not consider themselves to be special or doing anything outstanding; they just get on with the job at hand. It is imperative that these volunteers receive the necessary training to undertake their job to the best of their ability. However, the cost of this training should not be a financial burden on the community. It is the volunteer's intention to service and help the community, not to drain it financially.

All these rural services rely on fundraising efforts from their local community. Fundraising should be used to upgrade and provide additional equipment. This particular brigade has just spent \$2,400 of hard-earned funds to upgrade its communication systems. This is the type of expenditure that the community is only too happy to support. They feel that they are getting value for money as they can physically see the purchase, which is not the case with respect to the supply of certificates.

It is the respect and gratitude from their community that keeps these volunteers committed to their duties. Perhaps the government could learn from this community support and provide training for these volunteers at no cost. Currently the cost involved in gaining the appropriate certification is merely milking the rural communities of their funds. These organisations do not ask for a lot but they do deserve a fair go. I call on the minister to abolish all charges for training and certification for these outstanding community members. When a fire breaks out they have to get out and quite often control traffic, SES and rural fire brigades. Now they are told that they have to go and get a certificate—a piece of paper—to say that they are capable of doing a job. They are charged to do it. It is disgusting and stinks and should not happen.