



Speech by

Jack Dempsey

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (4.44 pm): I rise to contribute to debate on the report of Estimates Committee D. Obviously the seriousness of this debate reflects the seriousness of the contribution that Emergency Services workers throughout this state give to the people of Queensland. In saying that, I want to thank the men and women of the fire brigade, the auxiliary fire brigade, the rural fire brigade as well as the Ambulance Service and the SES. These men and women do not just give of their work time but give of their family time. Many of their husbands and wives and sons and daughters help them out on occasions when there is no-one else to give them a hand—not just in Brisbane but in other rural areas. They have to be congratulated for the great effort that they make in not just supporting their husbands and wives but the people of Queensland.

Often times emergency services throughout the state bind together and work in partnership with other community organisations simply because—and I am not telling the minister anything that he does not know—emergency services contribute so much to our way of life in Queensland, and that is so special to all rural sectors throughout the state. Whilst we talk about the men and women within the service, we have to ensure that we have services in place to support them because these people are exposed to certain parts of the community and certain emotions. They need proper counselling and debriefing and money should be spent to ensure that those who are affected by these serious accidents and situations get the best care possible. That is something that Emergency Services can work on in years to come.

The next issue I want to raise is an important one that is raised within the community of Bundaberg—that is, a lot of money is going into emergency services but there is not much quality coming back. The men and women who work in this area are trying their best, but they need more funds to keep it going, and hopefully we will get more in the future. The fire levy fund is being increased, but we want to see that money then being spent on proper fire strategies and going back into the fire service, not into other forms of revenue. Then there is the ambulance levy and community expectations. With the increase in electricity charges earlier this year, the ambulance levy has increased as well. Unfortunately, because of that levy people now have more expectations of our Ambulance Service and sometimes those expectations are unrealistic. I hope that the minister and the department work together to ensure that they explain to the wider community where these levies are going and how they are being used.

There has also been the introduction of mandatory fire alarms recently, and the main questions being asked of me as the local member relate to the educational and promotional side of them. It seems that it has been dropped on people too quickly and they need more education about them. In saying that, when we talk about promotion we do not want to see money being spent on mass media advertising. We do not want money going into advertising but rather into safety initiatives. We have to ensure that that money is prioritised and put into projects that get great value in return.

I have already spoken about the professionalism and dedication of people involved in this area. I want to put on the record that throughout the length and breadth of Queensland these people exhibit great determination and courage. They deserve all of the accolades they get. I fully support any measure that will assist emergency services throughout Queensland.