



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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SURFERS PARADISE FIRE STATION

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.49 pm): Recently I had the pleasure of attending an awards ceremony with the honourable Minister for Emergency Services at the Surfers Paradise Fire Station in my electorate where four Gold Coast firefighters were bestowed with an international award. The Robina Fire Station officers received the prestigious Higgins and Langley International Award in Swift Water Rescue, recognising their efforts in rescuing a couple from a raging Coomera River in March 2004.

Station officers Steven McKitterick and Steven Lohmann and senior firefighters Michael Mills and Robert Smyth carried out Queensland's first swift water rescue in torrential rain at Wongawallen where they freed a man pinned under a four-wheel drive in rising floodwaters. The dramatic rescue, which was recognised by firefighters in the United States where the Higgins and Langley International Award originates, highlights the changing face of our Fire and Rescue Service.

While there is a perception that fires only fight fires, our dedicated firefighters work around the clock responding to fire alarms, road accidents and natural disasters when they occur. Swift water rescue is one of the many skills of our modern day firefighters and the Gold Coast is fortunate enough to have a specialised swift water rescue team based at Robina Fire Station. I think they have taken over this role from the State Emergency Service over the last few years.

During the ceremony at the Surfers Paradise Fire Station, a flagship of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, 23 firefighters received national medals and clasps. These federal awards recognise 15 and 10 years of dedicated service respectively. It seems we are fortunate to have some of the most experienced firefighters in the state working on the Gold Coast. I have been fortunate to have been given a tour of the Surfers Paradise Fire Station and am very impressed with the new facility which was opened in 2003. I think it was codesigned by the people who work there. They are very appreciative of it.

Surfers Paradise is the busiest fire station on the Gold Coast, attending to more than 2,800 calls each year. It is certainly one of the busiest in Queensland. With a concentration of high-density living, as is the case in my electorate or the coastal part of it, the challenges facing modern day firefighters are immense. Last year it took five fire trucks, one ambulance and several police cars to quell a kitchen fire on the 36th floor of the Q1.

Fortunately, while many alarms turn out to be false ones, we must not forget the dangerous and incredibly important job that our firefighters do in the community. This point was not lost on the crowd at the Surfers Paradise presentation where two fire appliances were dedicated in memory of two firefighters, Herb Fennell and Noel Watson, who lost their lives in the line of duty on 11 February 1994. Around the anniversary of their deaths, firefighters reminded us that issues such as clothing, crew sizes, equipment and tasks constantly need to be revised in order to keep our fires safe on the road. I call upon the Minister for Emergency Services to heed their requests when they call and I congratulate the 23 recipients of awards. It was a great day. The families of fire service workers were there and the families of Herb Fennell and Noel Watson. That accident I remember very sadly.