



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Tuesday, 4 September 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Ambulance Service

Hon. N ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.10 am): I rise to inform the House of some positive initiatives being implemented within the Queensland Ambulance Service. This year's budget provided a record \$404.4 million and includes funding for the largest staffing boost in a single year. Two hundred and fifty ambulance officers will be employed this year on top of the additional 220 ambulance officers funded in last year's budget.

The service has embarked on an active recruitment campaign that is delivering results. Up till 3 September this financial year, the service has recruited an additional 112 ambulance officers. Sixty-five of those officers are on the road. Forty-seven new trainees, which is one of the biggest intakes in recent years, have commenced their in-service training and will join crews on the road next week.

Our international recruitment campaign of qualified paramedics has already delivered 46 paramedics from the United Kingdom who have commenced employment as advanced care paramedics. A further 72 applicants have been offered employment and are awaiting visa and travel clearances. QAS has also received another 87 applications from qualified ambulance officers.

I recently announced the employment of one of the United Kingdom's most qualified ambulance professionals. Ms Jayne Barnes was Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Ambulance Service and will soon commence work in Queensland as the new Assistant Commissioner for the South East Region. The Queensland Ambulance Service's ability to attract high-class recruits is evidence of the high regard our service is held within Australia and internationally.

This year we will also deliver 30 to 40 additional ambulances on the road as part of a total of 140 new ambulances that will assist in maintaining a modern fleet. This year's budget also provides funding for three new ambulance stations in busy urban areas and 17 redeveloped or replacement stations.

The QAS is also investing in new technology to increase efficiencies and the quality of our services. A new Computer Aided Dispatch system will come online later this year. Last month the Premier and I launched the roll-out across the state of over 600 new portable Motorola radios at a cost of over \$725,000. Those new radios increase safety for paramedics and improve patient care by providing paramedics with direct access to communication centres. This year's budget also provided \$70.4 million over two years for a new emergency operations and communications centre at Kedron which will provide upgraded communications technologies and be a hub for emergency management across Queensland.

Successive boosts in staffing have allowed the QAS to progress significant roster reforms across the ambulance service. Prior to the reforms, ambulance officers worked combinations of 10- and 14-hour shifts. The new rosters set the maximum rostered shift to 10 hours, which provides a much safer and healthier outcome for paramedics and also enables resources to be matched to areas of the highest demand.

Roster reform will also complement the introduction of an average 38-hour week from October this year. One of the significant benefits to ambulance officers will be the availability of nine weeks leave a year, made up of both annual leave and accrued time off. There is no doubt that the QAS is facing challenges. That is why the government is providing the resources and the funding needed to deliver these initiatives.