



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

International Women's Day; Emergency Services

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 am): The Department of Emergency Services is committed to a diverse workforce. That commitment is reflected right from the top of the department. Director-General Fiona McKersie is recognised as a leader in the field of emergency management and is also recognised as a mentor to women, not only within the department but also across the country.

In 2001 the department established a women's reference group to investigate a range of recruitment, employment and corporate culture issues that impact on the working lives of women in the Department of Emergency Services. In Queensland over a quarter of our paramedics and over half of our emergency medical dispatchers are women, as are 35 per cent of our State Emergency Services volunteers. Although there are currently only a limited number of female firefighters, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is actively working to promote firefighting as a career option for women.

The QFRS has developed an information session for presentation to female senior high school students by female firefighters to promote the idea of firefighting as a career. It was trialled in Mount Gravatt State High School late last year and the response was very positive. The department is now planning to take these presentations to a number of high schools in the Brisbane region later this year and trial an expansion of the sessions across the state.

I am pleased to say that the future looks bright for women in our emergency services. Many members of this House would be aware of the Emergency Services cadet program which is open to young Queenslanders. The cadet program currently has a total membership of 761, of which 350, or around 46 per cent, are females. Cadets have the opportunity to qualify for a national certificate in public safety, which is particularly helpful for those pursuing a career in Emergency Services as an ambulance officer or firefighter. These cadets are part of the future of our emergency services and considering that almost half of them are female we can be confident that in the not-so-distant future we will see a greater number of women in Emergency Services.

Along with the Premier I congratulate all the women in this House. I can remember when there were not so many female members. Because of the presence of the female members, this House now has different dynamics and it is a better workplace for that change in dynamics.