



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Ambulance Service

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.12 am): There has been a lot of misinformation circulated recently regarding the Queensland Ambulance Service, which members opposite have been more than happy to keep going. One thing they never mention is the simple fact that, since being elected, the Beattie government has more than doubled the QAS budget, which this year is a record \$355 million. I know that the member for Mirani has been promoting the myth that the community ambulance cover funding has been frittered away, but the facts do not back him. Since the introduction of the community ambulance cover in 2003, the number of paramedics has increased by over 400 officers; the number of ambulance vehicles is up by more than 100; and the QAS has also purchased around 400 defibrillators. We have also completed 24 new, replacement or refurbished ambulance stations and field offices.

There is no doubt that our paramedics are facing an increased demand for service as a result of Queensland's growing and ageing population. However, our paramedics are getting to more life-threatening cases in under 10 minutes than ever before. For example, over the current financial year to the end of April, our paramedics have responded to 7,933 more code 1s in under 10 minutes. That is an increase of over 8.6 per cent in the same period for the previous year. These are life-threatening cases, not stubbed toes or headaches as members opposite like to pretend. Again, the fact is that, since the introduction of the community ambulance cover in 2003, the increased demand for ambulance services has been in the higher acuity and critically ill patient categories, not for patients who could have had their condition treated by a GP—that is if they could find a GP. To my knowledge there are no 24-hour GPs left on the south side of Brisbane and no chemists are open after hours.

This fact is supported by Queensland Health data captured at emergency departments. For example, last financial year just 3.79 per cent of the lowest acuity triage category who presented to emergency departments at Queensland Health hospitals were transported by the QAS. In 2004-05 that figure was 3.43 per cent and the year before that it was 3.32 per cent. The government has the runs on the board for making sure the QAS has the resources it needs, and we will continue to keep the service well resourced.