



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Friday, 8 June 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Ambulance Service

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.48 am), by leave: I want to reiterate what the Premier said with regard to what the opposition raised here today in relation to an advertisement which I will have authenticated. I do know the officers, but I will have that authenticated.

The volunteer drivers scheme is a longstanding feature of Queensland Ambulance Service. Many hundreds of volunteer drivers work throughout this state. As members of the opposition should know, they are usually SES workers or rural firefighters who volunteer to assist their local ambulance service. In this state, there are about 290 stations. Of those, 200 are in the bush. Two-thirds of our stations are in country areas. A lot of those stations are single-officer stations like Calliope and Mount Larcom. They like to have a number of volunteers to call upon when attending cases if they think they may have to treat a patient in the back of the ambulance and will need a driver. In those cases, the paramedic will contact a volunteer and arrange to pick him or her up, en route to the case. The opposition leader does not know that. He does not know how emergency services operate, even though they have been doing it for many years.

Volunteers never respond on their own unless they are trained as first responders, of which we have many hundreds, or are honorary first officers. I thought that that was fairly common knowledge among members from both sides of the House. Indeed, the scheme was introduced by the National Party and has been operating for many years.

This advertisement simply calls for more volunteers to boost the numbers available to communities. That is not a new idea and the opposition is being misleading by trying to make out that it is. I have the numbers here: 380 honorary officers work across the state. As I said, this happened under previous National Party governments and it will continue under this government.

I thank those volunteers from throughout the state for the great work that they continue to do for emergency services in country areas. We need them to assist our ambulance officers. They do a great job and they do it very competently.

Mr Malone: What are we paying the ambulance cover for?

Mr PURCELL: I can hear a tinkling bell coming from the other side of the House, but I will not respond to him. He knows very well what the ambulance levy is for. Two-thirds of our ambulance stations are in the bush. That is not a bad effort. They well and truly get great value for their ambulance cover.