



Speech by

Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr RYAN (Morayfield—ALP) (12.25 pm): The outstanding and selfless work performed by our emergency services workers is a testimony to their dedication to the wellbeing of the people of Queensland and the Queensland community generally. My electorate is fortunate to have highly skilled and dedicated emergency services workers based at the Narangba Ambulance Station, the Burpengary Fire Station, the Burpengary police complex, the Narangba police beat and the Morayfield shopfront police beat. I take this opportunity to thank them and acknowledge their hard work and commitment to the people of the Morayfield state electorate.

Recently I was honoured to accompany, as an observer, paramedics from the Narangba Ambulance Station on routine emergency calls. My time with those inspirational individuals highlighted to me the challenges faced by our emergency services workers. I take this opportunity to especially acknowledge their hard work and commitment.

Much has changed since the first ambulance service began in Queensland in 1892 after a military medic witnessed a riding accident at the Brisbane showgrounds during show week. Shortly afterwards, the first ambulance station in Queensland was opened. The station was based at the old Brisbane newspaper company building and was equipped with one stretcher only. At the time there was no vehicle, and patients had to be transported on the stretcher by foot.

Today there are more than 260 ambulance locations throughout Queensland, and members of the Queensland Ambulance Service are highly qualified individuals who have undertaken years of training. These individuals continually display the impressive qualities of excellence and selfless service to others. Whilst more modern medical and administrative equipment would always be welcomed by front-line ambulance officers, there is no question that the Queensland Ambulance Service represents a substantial improvement from the humble beginnings of the first service operating from the old Brisbane newspaper company building and is recognised as one of the leading ambulance services in Australia.

To support the valuable work of our emergency service workers, the Queensland government has imposed penalties for false or malicious calls to the 000 emergency hotline. Minimum fines of \$1,000 exist for single offences, and fines of up to \$10,000 or one year's imprisonment may be imposed for repeat offenders. Unfortunately, false, malicious and inappropriate calls to the 000 emergency hotline have the potential to delay an emergency response to a critical or life-threatening emergency. Penalties, therefore, play a vital role in ensuring our emergency services workers are able to quickly and effectively respond in emergency situations.

These penalties, along with the important 000 advertising campaign, are some of the ways that the Queensland government is assisting our emergency services workers. The 000 advertising campaign commenced late last year and in my view has been a successful promotion of the need to call 000 only in an emergency. The advertising campaign grew out of concern that some people were using the 000 emergency hotline for minor conditions that were not life-threatening, critical or serious. In fact, anecdotal evidence showed that some of the calls received by the 000 emergency hotline included calls for minor

medical complaints like cuts and abrasions, toothaches, earaches, boils, ant bites, insomnia and hunger pains.

The use of the 000 emergency hotline for these minor medical complaints has the potential to divert emergency services workers away from potential emergencies. People need to understand that the 000 emergency hotline should be used only in life-threatening, critical or serious situations.

The advertising campaign uses slogans like, 'You wouldn't use a steamroller to crack a nut, so why call for an ambulance when it's not really needed?' The main message of the campaign was to remind people that the 000 hotline should be called only in life-threatening, critical or serious situations. For non-emergency advice or assistance people are reminded to call their doctor, pharmacist or the 13HEALTH hotline service.

The work of our emergency services workers is tremendous and contributes a great deal to the great lifestyle enjoyed by all Queenslanders. It is important to continually remind people how they can support our emergency services workers through proper use of the 000 hotline.