



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Wednesday, 3 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fire Safety

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.07 am): It is a disturbing fact that seven of the 17 house fire fatalities last year were lives lost during the winter months of June, July and August. Over the same three-month period, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service attended more than 470 house fires. That is why with temperatures starting to fall the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has launched its annual Winter Fire Safety campaign.

Queenslanders need to take the fire safety message to heart. It is all too easy to adopt an 'it won't happen to me' approach; however, the fact is that the use of heaters and electric blankets during winter dramatically increases the risk of fire. Lives can be saved if people act now to take the simple but necessary steps to protect themselves, their families and their properties. All households should ensure smoke alarms are installed and in good working order. Queenslanders should check all electrical equipment that has been stored over summer for obvious damage and faults. A simple test by an electrician is the safest option.

On the topic of smoke alarms, I am pleased to inform the House that currently around 97.3 per cent of Queensland households have smoke alarms installed—the highest rate of any state in Australia. In October 2006, the figure was 87.1 per cent. This figure has increased thanks to the introduction by the Labor government of smoke alarm legislation on 1 July 2007 and a comprehensive education and communication campaign. However, only 90 per cent of households have working smoke alarms, which is a figure that needs to be increased by residents regularly checking and changing their smoke alarm batteries.

Other simple, common-sense risk management measures include keeping heating devices away from curtains and clothing, making sure that no heating device is ever left unattended and developing an evacuation plan in case a fire does break out. These simple, common-sense measures can reduce the risk of house fire and prevent the needless loss of life.

As part of its vision for tomorrow's Queensland, the Bligh government is committed to supporting safe communities. Our Winter Fire Safety campaign and efforts to increase the number of properties with working smoke alarms demonstrate our commitment.