



Speech by

# Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Thursday, 4 June 2009

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (9.59 am): In December 2007 the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service notified Queensland Health of five cases of cancer among firefighters working at the Atherton Fire Station. At the request of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Health completed an epidemiological investigation.

The Queensland Health study found that the incidence of brain cancer amongst Atherton firefighters did fit the definition of a cancer cluster. However, the study also found that there were no identified hazards at the station that were linked to causing brain cancer. Queensland Health's study made nine recommendations, including that the fire service consider conducting further studies into the incidence of brain cancer amongst firefighters.

Monash University was commissioned to conduct the cancer study. The main findings of the university's Queensland firefighters' cancer incidence study included that: the overall cancer incidence in male active firefighters was not higher than expected; the incidence of malignant brain tumours was not higher than expected in male active firefighters; and melanoma incidence was found in a borderline statistically significant excess in male active firefighters. The incidence of other malignant tumours was not higher than expected in male active firefighters. For benign brain tumours, there was a doubling of the expected number in men, but this was based on only three observed cases, versus the 1.5 expected, and was not statistically significant. The employment records indicated that none of these cases had ever worked at Atherton. Overall cancer incidence in women who were active firefighters was not higher than expected. As the numbers of individual cancer types in women were small, no further analysis of cancer subgroups could be performed.

The report stated the overall cancer incidence was as expected for the males and females in the cohort and no individual cancer type or group was found to be significantly in excess for men. It also stated the study provided some reassurance that no excesses of cancer have occurred in Queensland firefighters since 1995, although the stated limitations of the study affect the strength of this conclusion to some degree.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has acted decisively on this matter. This morning, as a courtesy to officers working at the Atherton Fire Station they will be provided with copies of the report and briefed on its findings and recommendations. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is working closely with the United Firefighters Union and other representative bodies throughout Australia and New Zealand to further examine the issue. Work on a second longitudinal study into the incidence of cancer among firefighters is ongoing. I look forward to keeping the House informed on its findings.

I thank Monash University for the professional way in which it conducted this investigation. I table the *Final report on Queensland firefighters cancer incidence study* prepared by the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health.

*Tabled paper:* Report titled *Final report on Queensland fire fighters' cancer incidence study*, date June 2009, from the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health, Melbourne [\[330\]](#).

I move—

That the House authorise the publication of the report.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.