



Speech by


# Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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## RURAL FIRE SERVICE, VOLUNTEERING

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise tonight to speak on an issue important not only to my electorate of Burnett but also to the whole of Queensland. I speak of the issue of volunteering in the Queensland Rural Fire Service. The Queensland Rural Fire Service is a fantastic community focused organisation that has been powered over 50 years of service by its hardworking and dedicated volunteers. Rural fire brigades across Queensland service up to 93 per cent of the state and provide services such as fire mitigation, volunteer training and community education to rural and semirural areas across Queensland.

Even outside of rural communities, the Rural Fire Service has made a significant contribution, including during the floods that affected the south-east corner in 2011, with volunteers and appliances assisting in Brisbane. That is an effort worth mentioning and noting here in this House. It is an organisation that should certainly be proud of its positive contribution to Queensland's rural communities.

As the member for Burnett, I am extremely proud of the 80 rural fire brigades and 2,355 volunteers that service the Burnett-Bundaberg region. However, the future of the organisation hinges on the continued strength in the growth of its volunteers. This is why I speak tonight. I wish to use my time today to urge all members of the Burnett community to consider a rewarding volunteering opportunity with their local rural fire brigade. Being a volunteer in the Queensland Rural Fire Service is rewarding not only to the volunteer but also to their rural community and communities like it across Queensland. As a volunteer you learn new and important skills and develop friendships and connections within the brigade that will last a lifetime. It is the spirit of service that bonds volunteer fires, and it should be that spirit of service that attracts new volunteers to the service. That is why I fully support the recent initiatives taken by the local brigade to recruit new volunteers and educate the local community on their important role in fire management.

I would urge all Burnett residents to consider a future of volunteering in their local rural fire brigade, as volunteering is a noble cause and is vital to the Bundaberg-Burnett region. With fire season soon approaching, the need for volunteers is crucial. The long-term security of the service hinges on younger residents putting their hands up to volunteer. Younger residents in the Burnett-Bundaberg region are best placed to develop the service well into the future. They have the ability to use social media to attract volunteers and utilise new avenues of recruitment and they can continue to innovate the service in the long term. The opportunities available for younger Burnett residents are opportunities that will assist them for life and will help develop the region for years to come.

In conclusion, I encourage young people in the Bundaberg-Burnett region to log on, call up or do whatever they can to find out more information about becoming a volunteer in the rural fire brigade. The rewards for the volunteers and our community certainly outweigh the effort of signing up. It is a proud tradition to be a rural fire fighter.