




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Charters Towers Fire Station

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.54 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House a very important issue relating to the Charters Towers urban fire service and the important need to upgrade staffing hours. Emergency services is one of the most important services and it is important that staff are ready and available when called out to severe circumstances in the quickest, safest time. It is also important that our emergency service personnel are not fatigued and are equipped with the resources to carry out emergency services tasks in a professional manner. It is unbelievable that Charters Towers is one of only two stations in the state which maintains a five-day, eight-hour roster. There is a permanent crew of four members who work a 35-hour shift Monday to Friday. Outside these hours the district is protected by an auxiliary crew who respond by pager activation, with the permanent members also carrying pagers. At present there are 10 valuable and active auxiliary members with an average availability of four outside normal work hours and two during the week. In comparison, centres such as Ingham, Ayr and Bowen allow for seven-day, 11-hour rosters with two shifts, working a continuous four days on, four days off roster and averaging the same number of auxiliaries. Charters Towers has half the permanent staff yet travels more distance than Ingham, Ayr and Bowen put together. Charters Towers Fire Station has the largest boundary per population in the state, with a travelling distance at times of more than 400-kilometre round trips.

When Charters Towers is called out, Wulguru has to cover, which then leaves Wulguru to provide their backup. Charters Towers also has valuable nursing facilities—Charters Towers Hospital, Eventide aged care facility and the rehabilitation centre. Charters Towers has three private schools including one high school and seven primary schools to attend to in the region, with 70 pubs existing or converted to heritage listed buildings and historical buildings in Ravenswood.

The boundary extends up to Greenvale, out to Pentland and down to Belyando. Charters Towers also meets four ways—Townsville to Charters Towers, Charters Towers to Hughenden, north to Greenvale and south to Clermont, servicing an area of more than 60,000 square kilometres. There were eight heavy transport accidents in 2013. Charters Towers is a major rail corridor for Townsville to Mount Isa. Besides transporting people, the rail carries hazardous material with a major spill after a derailment on Mingela Range last year.

Charters Towers urban fire service is also called to provide and assist in medical duties. The urban fire service is one of the highest per station in comparable size in North Queensland, with 335 call-outs last year. Our urban fire service needs to be self-sufficient for natural disasters, and I believe that in this day and age the Charters Towers region deserves the same coverage as every other town in this state. I call on the minister to review the Charters Towers urban fire station staffing hours to ensure they are in line with the urban fire service across this state—

(Time expired)