




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Rural Firefighters

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (11.52 am): Today is a very special day for rural fireys right across Queensland. Today we celebrate rural fire day by wearing yellow ribbons. I am proud to see so many members in the House wearing yellow ribbons to celebrate this very special day.

There are approximately 36,000 rural fireys right around Queensland. They cover approximately 93 per cent of the state of Queensland. Rural and regional members know how diverse the state is and how geographically isolated many communities are. To have the rural fireys there where the urbans are not is particularly important for regional and rural Queensland. However, it is not just about rural and regional Queensland. I am based on the Sunshine Coast, and there is a hinterland a short distance from the beach.

Mr Powell: It is on the other side of the highway.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is on the other side of the highway. Also in that area, on the border of the electorates of Buderim and Glass House, we have the Ilkley and Eudlo rural fireys who do a fantastic job. They are supported of course right around Queensland by members of parliament.

Recently I was particularly pleased to attend the Bli Bli rural fire service and the Gold Coast. Many members at the Gold Coast joined with the member for Mudgeeraba and others on the coast. They got all of the rural fireys together to show the support the LNP have for rural fireys right around Queensland.

Mrs Stuckey: Currumbin?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection of the member for Currumbin. I enjoyed my visit to the Currumbin rural fire station also. I also visited locally on the Sunshine Coast.

Rural fireys cannot do their jobs without the support of an association. Today I mention the Rural Fire Brigade Association of Queensland and its chief executive officer, Justin Choveaux. That organisation represents some 36,000 rural fireys in Queensland, 2½ thousand fire wardens, 1,400-plus rural fire brigades, 415 rural fire stations and 942 rural fire trucks plus trailerable and slip-on units. As I said, 93 per cent of Queensland is covered by the rural firefighter volunteers. The Rural Fire Brigade Association has provided over \$1 million in grants to the rural fire brigades, and the association is recognised as the peak body supporting and representing Queensland rural fire brigade volunteers.

This LNP team acknowledges today the very important work of rural firefighters and all firefighters right around Queensland. If it were not for the LNP firefighters accord that we signed with the firefighters in late 2014, we would not have seen some of the reforms we saw passed through this parliament a few weeks ago, including presumptive legislation. We on this side of the House were not going to

discriminate with our presumptive legislation. We believed that all firefighters who contracted cancer should obtain the benefits of that presumptive legislation. That is why I was particularly pleased that, although the LNP bill did not get passed through the parliament, the government were forced to amend their bill, copying the LNP bill, to provide all firefighters with protection. Whether they drive a red truck or a yellow truck, all firefighters in Queensland are now supported by that presumptive legislation.

National Firefighters Remembrance Day was celebrated last weekend. The nation observed a minute's silence to acknowledge and remember all firefighters—whether they drive a rural fire truck, a red truck, an urban truck or an auxiliary truck. We remembered those who have lost their lives fighting fires right around Australia but particularly in Queensland. We acknowledged those who have lost their lives because of the dangerous job they have. We also acknowledged their families. Every time firefighters leave the house their families do not know what sort of day they are going to have—if they will be called to a bushfire, a house fire or a traffic accident. They have to deal with things no-one should have to see or deal with in one's life.

On this yellow ribbon day, on behalf of the LNP I pay particular tribute to all our rural fire brigade volunteers—some 36,000—and thank them from the bottom of our hearts for the tireless work they do in making sure Queenslanders are protected from the elements and protected from what many in the community walk away from. We send our rural fireys into difficult situations to, on many occasions, save Queenslanders. We salute the rural fire brigade. We salute all firefighters in Queensland for the amazing work they do. We on this side of the House offer our utmost support for our rural fire brigades on this very special yellow ribbon day.