




Speech By
Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2017

MOTION

Emergency Services Personnel

 **Mr CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (6.16 pm): The member for Gaven comes in here and uses the words ‘ambulance officer’. He hides behind the technical term because what he was is an ambulance employee. I was an ambulance paramedic. There is a big difference between the member for Gaven and the member for Thuringowa and me.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members, I am having difficulty hearing the member speaking. I certainly hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr CRAWFORD: As a former paramedic with the Queensland Ambulance Service, no-one is more aware than I am of the risks faced by our front-line emergency services workers every single day.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to invite the member to start again. I cannot hear him because of the members who want to try to speak over the top of the member. Can we restart the clock? I call the member to start again.

Mr CRAWFORD: I rise to support the government’s amendment to the motion. As a former paramedic with the Queensland Ambulance Service, no-one is more aware than I am of the risks faced by our front-line emergency services workers every day. The member for Thuringowa and I were paramedics working on the front line. Unlike the member for Gaven, we actually faced people. We took the threats. I have been assaulted many times. I still have many friends in the service and this is a very personal issue for me and a very personal issue for all of Queensland’s paramedics. I think it is very offensive for anybody to use this issue purely for political force.

To suggest that I would be part of a government that did not place the greatest importance on the safety of my friends and former colleagues is offensive. Indeed, I am extremely proud that the Palaszczuk Labor government has invested \$1.3 million to protect our paramedics from the violence they are sometimes confronted with. The Palaszczuk government also accepted all 15 recommendations of the Paramedic Safety Taskforce and have invested further resources, including training all staff in situational awareness and conflict avoidance, with training refreshed every 12 months.

Mr Harper: I did that.

Mr CRAWFORD: I take the interjection from the member for Thuringowa, who did that training. It also included training staff to use the sedation drug droperidol to sedate aggressive and dangerous patients; installing a covert duress monitoring system in all ambulances to allow paramedics to alert authorities of dangerous situations in the back of an ambulance; and ensuring triple 0 calls are rigorously screened and interrogated for potential danger for paramedics, with staff strongly encouraged to report all assaults.

Mr Cramp interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Gaven, I understand that we will go to the adjournment debate once this debate is over. I have the option of warning you at this late stage of the week's sitting. I choose not to, but if you persist you will be warned.

Mr CRAWFORD: We have developed a statewide central victim support unit framework to support health workers after any violent incident and with any associated court processes. We have revised security guidelines for the first time in 16 years to reflect current practices.

Unfortunately, amongst many other things, the previous LNP government failed to recognise the impending ice drug epidemic. Instead, they cut services and staff that would have lessened the devastating impact that that drug now has on so many Queensland families and communities. In government, the LNP's idea of law reform was to cut funding to services, sack front-line staff and sell off our public assets. They abolished 106 senior police officer positions. They moved officers from the front line to desk-bound jobs in the PSBA. They reneged on a commitment to provide \$20 million for extra police and police training to patrol safe night precincts. They forced police to buy their own body worn cameras and they set up the PSB Agency as part of a sneaky plan to privatise, civilianise and outsource watch houses, speed camera operations and police academies in Townsville and Brisbane.

Those opposite are no friends of the emergency services workers in this state. All of the firefighters, the paramedics, the police, the nurses and the doctors remember what the LNP did to their colleagues during those three years. I remember the Newman government throwing the chequebook at discrediting paramedics on the stand at the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. I remember the LNP accusing Queensland paramedics of fraud and of claiming meal overtime provisions that they were not entitled to.

I remember them going after a good friend of mine, a Metro South advanced care paramedic who had done nothing more than defend his entitlements. They tracked his movements. They spied on his movements. They used CCTV footage. They took photos. They used location devices and case records to try to prove that he was a fraud and they failed. He is a great paramedic and he did not deserve that. It gets better, because they even went after me. The LNP, those opposite, embarked on a mission to completely discredit my character. They labelled me a fraud and a thief. They accused me—

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, my understanding is that the member is talking about his own experience. If members want to interject, they will interject from their seat. I understand that he is talking about his own experience. It is not hearsay; it is his own experience. I find it relevant to the motion and the amendment we are debating in the House.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I rise to a point of order. With the greatest respect, the speaker was not talking about his own experience; he was referring to a colleague.

Mr SPEAKER: My apologies. I thought the member was referring to his own experience. Irrespective, the issue is that he is not being provocative and it is relevant to the point.

Mr CRAWFORD: Those opposite embarked on a mission to completely discredit my character by making accusations that I had intentionally defrauded the system to make money. They put arguably the best barrister the Newman government could buy against me on the stand for four hours. They challenged the integrity of all Queensland paramedics that day. They sent investigators to Cairns. They interrogated Cairns communications records. They tried to prove that, after I went to a scene where a person died, somehow I had committed fraud and stole money from the QAS, but they failed. When they failed, the LNP created a spark in me that sent me to this very House to do the job that I do.

What we have from the LNP is complete hypocrisy and I will not stand for it. I do not believe they have it in their DNA to help or support emergency services workers at all. Our emergency services workers can see right through the hollow promises of the LNP and what they stand for. Only the Labor government will stand up for emergency services workers.

(Time expired)