




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Ambulance Service

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.34 pm): As a former paramedic of some 28 years, I know the good job that our ambulance staff do in our communities right across Queensland. We have heard the very good news from the minister in relation to the increased budget for QAS.

QAS has a broad and diverse workforce including from our call takers who provide assistance over the phone—we have all seen reports in the media of babies being born whilst under instruction from our emergency medical dispatchers—to our patient transport officers, LARU officers, advanced care and critical care paramedics, and all QAS support staff. The Queensland Ambulance Service is there each day providing compassionate, quality patient care to Queenslanders in their time of need. I know that they are each filled with care and compassion. We all recall that infamous picture of the terminally ill patient wanting to view the ocean just one last time.

Last year, the QAS reported that they received more than one million calls for service. They can be responding to calls for service from an acute patient suffering a heart attack to being on standby at major sporting events, responding to calls for service from the rescue helicopter platform, providing advice and care from our low acuity response units, and providing assistance to other emergency services. They also respond to a range of challenging and complex cases where some patients can be affected by drugs or alcohol or certain medical conditions. In some of these cases, sadly we are hearing of our fine men and women of the QAS being assaulted on the job.

We know that our QAS paramedics save lives every day. Sadly, however, we recently saw in Townsville concerning figures about QAS staff coping abuse and being assaulted whilst on the job, and that is simply unacceptable. Across the state there has been a decline generally in paramedic assaults thanks to the work of QAS, the Queensland Police Serve and United Voice ensuring that QAS paramedics were provided with safety and situational awareness training and the government accepting all 15 recommendations from the Queensland Paramedic Safety Taskforce.

However, in Townsville the reported assault numbers on our local paramedics remained stubbornly high, and in January I wrote to the health minister requesting more to be done. I would like to thank the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services for coming up to Townsville on 24 April to launch a local initiative in Townsville aimed at increasing public awareness through social media and billboards that abusing our paramedics will not be tolerated. I thank those paramedics and QAS communications staff who shared their own powerful and thought-evoking stories—advanced care paramedics Naomi O'Callaghan, Belinda Boyle and Sean Cottrell; emergency medical dispatcher Corey Grainger; and operations centre supervisor David Beil. There is no excuse for abuse.

While I am on my feet, I want to acknowledge the minister for our record funding of over \$800 million—an increase of 10 per cent—in the budget handed down yesterday; for the announcement of 200 additional ambulance officers for Queensland who will be dispatched throughout the state; and for the \$1.6 million going towards the \$5 million replacement of the Kirwan Ambulance Station, which is where I worked.