




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Emergency Services, Helicopters

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.56 pm): I rise to talk about a dedicated police helicopter. The member for Thuringowa would do well to listen because the people of Townsville need to know that when you need a police car or a police four-wheel drive it should be a suitable vehicle and when you need an ambulance it should be a suitable vehicle so when you get a medical helicopter and you put an old and lower resolution FLIR on the front of it—that is, a forward looking infra-red—

Mr HARPER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Toowoomba North is misleading the House. It is a \$1 million FLIR system on the front of the AW139s.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for Thuringowa, there is no point of order, thank you. If you have issues with misleading then I invite you to write to the Speaker.

Mr WATTS: Townsville has a QG fleet medical helicopter. It is a great helicopter. It is an AW139.

Ms JONES: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The conversation that the honourable member is having is anticipating the debate of their own motion that they put this morning in the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I ask you to resume your speech, I caution you that that topic is one of the topics in the motion for debate later this afternoon. If you persist down this line I will ask you to move on to another topic.

Mr WATTS: Let us discuss the capabilities of the AW139 helicopter, which is the medical helicopter that is available here in Townsville. They are specifically tasked for medical purposes.

Mr HARPER: I rise to a point of order. I will be writing to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. He is misleading the House. It is not a medical helicopter; it is a multiplatform helicopter for police, ambulance and fire.

Ms SIMPSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is deliberately disrupting the House. He knows that that is a frivolous point of order. I ask you to rule.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Member for Thuringowa, I have previously given you advice around writing to the Speaker. You do not need to continue to interject. I invite you to write to the Speaker if you have issues with what the member for Toowoomba North is saying.

Mr WATTS: The medical helicopter that I am talking about is a 6½-tonne helicopter, as opposed to other helicopters that are used for different purposes around the state, which are more likely to weigh 3½ tonnes. One would think that a member who might have worked on that helicopter for some time would know that a medical helicopter has priority when it is called for a medical emergency, as it should. It is most important that the people of North Queensland have a decent medical fleet to support them when they find themselves in difficulty. What we are seeing here is a little bit of manipulation of the media. We put a helicopter in front of the media and we try to tell them that the helicopter can do one thing versus another. We know that an ambulance—

Ms JONES: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, you have just warned the honourable member. Very kindly, you gave him a bit of latitude. It is about time that he respects the motion that the LNP has put before the parliament today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cooper. Member for Toowoomba North, I allowed you to go down the road with the medical helicopter. The moment you start referring to police helicopters, which—

Mr WATTS: I never said 'police', Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am warning you that, if you go down that road, you will be pre-empting this afternoon's debate on the motion.

Mr WATTS: An AW139 is a 6½-tonne helicopter. A Bell 429 is a 3½-tonne helicopter and costs about half the amount to run on a per-hour basis. It is a much cheaper and more efficient helicopter. Obviously, that helicopter can perform specific tasks, as can the AW139, which does a great job as a medical helicopter here in North Queensland. It does not have all of the equipment that might be used for other purposes when other service agencies are looking for—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Member for Toowoomba North, again you are sailing very close to the breeze. I caution you. I accepted your comparisons between helicopters, but when you start referring to other uses I imagine that that will come up during this afternoon's debate on the motion. You have 30 seconds remaining. I invite you to continue. However, you have had three goes now. I might have to ask you to resume your seat.

Mr WATTS: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your guidance. It is clear and it should be clear to the people of Townsville that an ambulance is a vehicle that can be used for a specific purpose. It comes under the control of the health authority and it can be tasked specifically to deal with health related issues. A police vehicle is a vehicle that can be tasked by the police specifically for police purposes. If someone has stolen your car and the police are trying to set up a barricade, they need police vehicles and not ambulances.