




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.40 am): QFES has put in place comprehensive policy and procedures to help keep our frontline staff and volunteers as safe as possible. Our operational personnel have received significant training for the protection of their safety in a range of circumstances. When attending alarm calls at residential based facilities like aged care and hospitals, QFES crews now will be wearing P2 masks and gloves. QFES personnel have been urged to minimise interaction with the public by time and distance where possible. When going inside a building to investigate an alarm panel or liaise with owner/occupiers, reduced crew numbers will undertake this task when that is possible.

QFES is encouraging meetings to be held by teleconference to minimise face-to-face interaction. All international travel that QFES sponsors or is work related is suspended. The only state based fire and rescue training that will be authorised to commence or continue will be the fire and rescue recruit courses, the fire communications officer recruit course and the current fire and rescue officer development courses.

Specific regional training activities, such as the one for the combined aerial pump appliances, may be continued at the discretion of the regional QFES assistant commissioners. Other training may be added as the situation evolves. All community education programs as well as charity or fundraising events will stop, unless specifically related to COVID-19. Where possible, only staff on shift and management staff working out of those stations will be at fire stations.

All state and regional offices will limit access to QFES staff and volunteers only. Prevention health messaging advice has been and will continue to be circulated to QFES staff and volunteers, consistent with Queensland Health advice. While QFES can take a range of actions to minimise the spread of COVID-19, QFES personnel will always be encountering members of the public in the course of their day-to-day work and this cannot be totally eliminated.

Our people are the most important asset. Healthy and fit QFES members means Queenslanders will continue to have crews on hand to respond to critical emergencies. QFES staff and volunteers remain ready to serve their community, state and country. The QFES Commissioner has commenced planning for how QFES crews will be able to assist other agencies such as Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland police.

QFES provides international search and rescue teams as part of its INSARAG commitment along with New South Wales, and I can report to the House that Queensland's rotation to be on standby is from 1 April. Currently, QFES is in contact with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to determine how this will be provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. QFES is confident it can ensure it protects the health and safety of its first responders. All QFES crew staff and volunteers stand ready to serve their state.