



Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan


MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2023

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMERGENCY SERVICES REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.28 am): I present a bill for an act to amend the Disaster Management Act 2003, the Disaster Management Regulation 2014, the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990, the Police Service Administration Act 1990, the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights, and I nominate the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to consider the bill.


Tabled paper: Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023 [1993](#).

Tabled paper: Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023, explanatory notes [1994](#).

Tabled paper: Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023, statement of compatibility with human rights [1995](#).

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.29 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The message from Her Excellency the Governor recommends the State Emergency Service Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL 2023

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, DR JEANNETTE ROSITA YOUNG AC PSM, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—


A Bill for an Act to establish the State Emergency Service and for related purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 28 November 2023

Tabled paper: Message, dated 28 November 2023, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the State Emergency Service Bill 2023 [1996](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.29 am): I present a bill for an act to establish the State Emergency Service and for related purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to consider the bill.


Tabled paper: State Emergency Service Bill 2023 [1997](#).

Tabled paper: State Emergency Service Bill 2023, explanatory notes [1998](#).

Tabled paper: State Emergency Service Bill 2023, statement of compatibility with human rights [1999](#).

MARINE RESCUE QUEENSLAND BILL

Message from Governor

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.30 am): I present a message from Her Excellency the Governor.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The message from Her Excellency the Governor recommends the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill. The contents of the message will be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings*. I table the message for the information of members.

MARINE RESCUE QUEENSLAND BILL 2023

Constitution of Queensland 2001, section 68

I, DR JEANNETTE ROSITA YOUNG AC PSM, Governor, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a Bill intituled—


A Bill for an Act to establish Marine Rescue Queensland and for related purposes

GOVERNOR

Date: 28 November 2023

Tabled paper: Message, dated 28 November 2023, from Her Excellency the Governor, recommending the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 [2000](#).

Introduction

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.30 am): I present a bill for an act to establish Marine Rescue Queensland and for related purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 [2001](#).

Tabled paper: Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023, explanatory notes [2002](#).

Tabled paper: Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023, statement of compatibility with human rights [2003](#).

These bills represent the first stage of legislative amendments designed to improve our emergency services and how we manage natural disasters and other similar events in Queensland. One of the greatest risks that we face in Queensland is natural disasters. Our environment and climate makes Queensland one of the best places in the world to live, but it also comes at a cost. We are one of the most disaster-affected states in Australia. Over the past decade, we have experienced almost 90 significant natural disasters and weather events, ranging from fires to floods and cyclones to storms.

Unfortunately, the risk of natural disasters is growing. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements noted that ‘the 2019-20 severe weather season provided only a glimpse of the types of events that Australia is likely to face in the future’ and that ‘Australia is facing increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, a significant number of which are likely to be compounding. Governments will need to prepare for more large-scale multijurisdictional crises.’

A priority of the Palaszczuk government is the safety of our communities. We take that responsibility seriously, and we recognise the importance of our emergency services agencies performing optimally. A series of reviews of our emergency services has been conducted, culminating in the KPMG *Independent review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services* and the Inspector-General Emergency Management’s Review into Queensland’s Disaster Management Arrangements. The goal of these reviews included ensuring the sustainability of the delivery of emergency services could be achieved and enhancing our disaster management arrangements. This government has accepted recommendations made in these reviews, bringing to pass the need for these bills. These bills will establish the State Emergency Service and a new marine rescue service, namely Marine Rescue Queensland, in standalone acts. The Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill will tie these organisations into the Queensland Police Service through making the necessary administrative arrangements for this to occur.

Currently, marine rescue services are conducted by the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland, which has 26 squadrons and about 1,400 members, and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association of Queensland, which consists of 21 flotillas and around 1,200 members. These organisations patrol our coastline, providing an invaluable maritime service to the community. Their services include disaster response, medical evacuations, marine radio monitoring, educating the public on safe boating practices and, in particular, providing assistance to police to conduct search and rescue operations.

The Blue Water Review and the subsequent independent review identified a need for an integrated statewide marine rescue service, as the existing services may operate in unclear and occasionally overlapping areas with varying levels of service delivery. The Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 addresses this issue by establishing Marine Rescue Queensland as a marine rescue service for the Queensland community. The Marine Rescue Queensland membership will consist of: the Marine Rescue Queensland chief executive, known as the chief officer; Marine Rescue Queensland employees; and Marine Rescue Queensland volunteers, who will be appointed by the Police Commissioner to perform different roles and functions.

Consistent with recommendations made in the independent review, the commissioner's functions are designed to ensure that Marine Rescue Queensland can be administered effectively through strategically aligning Marine Rescue Queensland with other emergency services agencies. The commissioner may determine the boundaries of a Marine Rescue Queensland area where a Marine Rescue Queensland unit may be established. This can only occur after the commissioner considers the local needs for the area and whether it would be appropriate for a Marine Rescue Queensland unit to be established at that location.

The Marine Rescue Queensland chief officer is responsible for the day-to-day efficient management of Marine Rescue Queensland at the state level and must give effect to any direction given by the commissioner relevant to the functions of Marine Rescue Queensland and its members. The management of Marine Rescue Queensland units at the local level will be the responsibility of a Marine Rescue Queensland unit commander, who will ensure the unit's members are well trained, appropriately equipped and acting in compliance with established procedures. At a regional level, Marine Rescue Queensland coordinators will have oversight of a number of individual Marine Rescue Queensland units and will be able to facilitate the coordination and cooperation of these units' efforts.

Further, the bill will establish statutory powers and protections for Marine Rescue Queensland as an organisation and its members and for the community it serves. For example, the bill will authorise Marine Rescue Queensland members who are performing their functions to enter a place if there is a situation likely to result in immediate harm to another person, property or the environment if action is not taken. For instance, a Marine Rescue Queensland member may come across an unoccupied vessel floating in a sea lane, causing a navigational hazard and presenting a clear risk to safety. To gain control of the vessel, the bill provides the Marine Rescue Queensland member a clear authority to board the vessel so that it may be safely steered and recovered for its owner. This power is balanced, as a Marine Rescue Queensland member cannot enter the place if the occupier is present unless reasonable attempts are made to inform the occupier of the need to enter and obtain their consent. As a matter of common sense, this requirement is not necessary if meeting this requirement would result in danger to a person or property.

I am confident that the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill will lead to enhanced marine rescue services and better interoperability between units by providing better clarity around Marine Rescue Queensland's members' roles and responsibilities, consistent training and standardisation of procedures and policies, and enhanced asset management.

Another recommendation from the independent review outlined that the State Emergency Service should be better aligned with the Queensland Police Service. The State Emergency Service is a not-for-profit organisation consisting of State Emergency Service units established within local government areas. Currently, there are 75 SES units comprising 303 SES groups, supported by a large cohort of thousands of volunteers. The SES provides an essential service to the community by providing assistance during floods, storms or other similar events. Often the police and the SES work together on search and rescue operations, disaster response, traffic management and other tasks that support the community.

The rationale underlying the recommendation to transition and better align the State Emergency Service with the Queensland Police Service is the recognition that certain functions undertaken by the police and the SES are already closely aligned. The State Emergency Service Bill 2023 will meet this

recommendation by providing the commissioner with functions that will assist in the administration of the SES. Consistent with the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill, the SES bill will provide that SES membership will consist of the SES chief officer, SES employees and SES volunteers who will be appointed by the commissioner to perform different roles and functions.

The commissioner may establish SES units within local government areas with the agreement of the relevant local government after making certain considerations to determine if it is appropriate to do so. Command and control of the SES will be achieved through the commissioner appointing SES members into a variety of roles, including that of SES chief officer, SES commander and local controller of an SES unit.

At a state level, the SES chief officer will be responsible for managing the efficient day-to-day running of the SES as a whole and is obliged to give effect to any direction given by the commissioner relating to the function of the SES or SES members. Management of SES units will remain the responsibility of a local controller of an SES unit who must ensure that:

- the unit's members are appropriately skilled;
- their equipment is appropriately maintained; and
- the unit and its members perform SES functions in accordance with relevant policies, procedures and directions.

At a regional level, SES commanders will have oversight of a number of SES units and can advise local controllers about SES unit resources that may be made available from outside of their local government area and will be able to promote cooperation and coordination between SES units. This bill will allow SES members who are authorised rescue officers to continue to exercise their powers as needed by relocating relevant provisions that currently exist in the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990. Both the Marine Rescue Queensland and SES bills will provide protections for Marine Rescue Queensland and SES members and their respective organisations by prohibiting:

- the unauthorised use of restricted expressions; and
- the impersonation of a Marine Rescue Queensland or an SES member.

This acknowledges the regard that Marine Rescue Queensland and SES members hold, or will hold, in the community. These emergency service members deserve to be well respected, as they are relied upon by the public in times of need.

Members of the community should be able to expect that a person declaring themselves to be a Marine Rescue Queensland member or an SES member are, in reality, from these organisations and words such as 'MRQ', 'Marine Rescue Queensland', 'SES' or 'State Emergency Service' should not be misused, particularly for the purpose of raising funds.

Similarly, both the Marine Rescue Queensland and the SES bills will protect the reputation of these organisations and their members through providing measures that allow for the suspension of a Marine Rescue Queensland or SES volunteer and SES members employed by local governments. These members are not subject to the disciplinary arrangements under the Public Sector Act 2022, and it is critical for the reputation of Marine Rescue Queensland and the SES that there is a mechanism available to suspend any member from their duties if the person would be subject to discipline if they had been a public sector employee or if the proper and efficient management of the SES or Marine Rescue Queensland would be prejudiced if the person was not suspended.

In fairness to the subject member, the commissioner must consider all reasonable alternatives available to the volunteer such as a change in duties or location prior to suspending the member, and the suspension period is only for the time necessary to investigate the matter of complaint. This amendment will benefit the subject member as an opportunity is afforded to investigation of an allegation, and if it is found to be baseless the subject member may continue with their work and their contribution.

Additionally, the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023 will deem Marine Rescue Queensland and SES members as staff members of the Queensland Police Service. This will ensure that:

- Marine Rescue Queensland and the SES have consistent governance and command structures;
- IT systems will have consistent security settings and frameworks;
- information sharing processes are streamlined; and
- efficiency gains may be made by reducing the duplication of any policies or procedures.

This bill will ensure that existing civil liability protections for the SES and its members will continue to apply to the SES and will extend these protections to Marine Rescue Queensland and its members.

This bill will also address a part of the larger disaster management reform program that is currently underway. Queensland's disaster management arrangements operate through a tiered system outlined in the Disaster Management Act 2003, which allows for a progressive escalation of support and assistance to affected communities through disaster management groups that operate at a local, district and state level.

The Queensland Disaster Management Committee is the paramount group providing strategic leadership to all other disaster management groups. The Queensland Disaster Management Committee's membership consists of ministers, supported by directors-general, observers and invitees by the chair of the Queensland Disaster Management Committee, who is currently the Premier and Minister for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023 will formally establish the State Disaster Management Group, which will be available to provide early strategic oversight of disaster operations and make recommendations to the Queensland Disaster Management Committee about disaster management strategies and policies. The State Disaster Management Group will be chaired by the Premier and its members will consist of core ministers, departmental officials and statutory officials well versed in disaster management, allowing strategic decisions to be rapidly made and disseminated.

I will foreshadow that in the future I intend to introduce a further bill that will address the remaining recommendations from the independent review and the review conducted by the Inspector-General of Emergency Management that also require legislative reform.


This government is delivering the largest change to disaster management this state has seen for many years. The Reform Implementation Taskforce, led by Special Reform Coordinator Steve Gollschewski, has been leading these reforms and has been overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the reforms while maintaining service delivery. The Reform Implementation Taskforce is collaborating closely with all stakeholders across state and local governments to ensure a measured, consistent and cohesive implementation of the changes.

This work is supported by this government's commitment to a total funding package of over \$578 million over five years with \$142 million per annum ongoing, which is already resulting in increased resources for our emergency services and greater numbers of full-time emergency service personnel. For example, our State Emergency Service uplift will see an initial \$16.8 million dedicated to this organisation with additional fleet purchases and an increase of 30 full-time-equivalent positions for the 2023-24 financial year. The allocation of a further 30 FTE positions for the following 2024-25 financial year will see the number of SES FTE grow to 219. This is only a small snapshot of the investment in disaster management that this government has made. The allocation of the ongoing \$142 million per annum is expected to significantly enhance the efforts of fire and emergency services in Queensland.

I must acknowledge that the greatest contribution, though, is from our emergency services personnel—the staff and officers of the fire and emergency services volunteer agencies. Thousands upon thousands of outstanding Queenslanders donate their time and energy to provide a broad range of fire and emergency services to assist our communities during our greatest times of need. We cannot thank them enough. Their work is incredibly important and is valued by all Queenslanders, by this government and by this parliament. It is incumbent on us to ensure that these emergency service personnel are placed in the best position possible to continue to operate efficiently and effectively. These bills achieve this objective by making the changes needed for this to occur. I commend the bills to the House.

EMERGENCY SERVICES REFORM AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (11.48 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.


Bill read a first time.

Referral to Legal Affairs and Safety Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL

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