



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Rural Fire Service Volunteers

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.07 pm): Further to announcements today about budget allocations for rural fires and providing new replacement vehicles and increasing investment, I need to raise what appears to be a disappointing bureaucratic decision in dealing with our 26,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers across the state. Rural Fire Service volunteers have raised many times the need for a supply of a dress uniform which has been denied with the response, 'No, you are not entitled.' I sympathise with our volunteers who turn up to events like Firefighters Remembrance Day, medal and award ceremonies and funerals et cetera after asking for a dress uniform like all other organisations have. It is embarrassing when urban fires are all dressed the same in dress uniforms looking really professional and the rural fires present, in their words, looking like Brown's cows. It is an absolute embarrassment and an affront to rural members, who show pride in the various brigades, to have to present in operational uniforms.

I have received reports of members applying this year for jackets and winter apparel only to be told no. We have heard of requisition forms being submitted for a pair of dress boots to be utilised at official functions only to be refused on the grounds that members already have a pair of boots. The existing boots are turnout boots which are worn while fighting fires and in everyday operational activities and then they are expected to wear them at these important events.

On behalf of the volunteer rural firefighters in Queensland, I request that they be issued a dress uniform, which has been suggested to me—a shirt, a tie, long pants all of the same colour and some elasticised boots that they can utilise. It needs to be stressed that the ongoing issuing of cargo pants and polo shirts should be specifically used for deployment and training only.

I take this opportunity to again raise the issue of a blue card on behalf of many volunteers across Queensland and in my electorate who are still battling. This is affecting recruitment and retention. These issues have not gone away. I share their concerns that we have lost thousands of volunteers due to the ludicrous rule that classifies them as 'health workers'. I do acknowledge this issue has been raised several times. Of course, it is about child safety. We are not trying to cheapen the issue, but I do say it would be very rare to see a child on a fire ground.

The issue that has been brought to my attention is not so much when getting the card but when renewing it. Now that they have moved over to the transport department, they have to produce a new photo on a regular basis. That puts another bureaucrat burden on these men and women volunteers who provide so much.

In the time that I have left to me, I want to remind members that the Parliamentary Friends of Rural Fire Brigades will here in parliament, in the Undumbi Room, on 12 September. I mention the member for Nicklin, Rob Skelton, and the member for Hill, Shane Knuth, for their work. I give a shout-out to the member for Maryborough and others who have been to Camp Gregory recently for the second-hand appliance that was repurposed. I thank all who did the important work for the fire brigade.