



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 7 March 2024

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Emergency Services, Resources**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.57 pm): 'The economic costs outweigh the measured economic benefits.' Those are the words from Building Queensland's Public Safety Regional Radio Communications Project detailed business case from 2017. As Queenslanders learned in today's *Courier-Mail*, our emergency services in regional areas are operating in a black hole due to a lack of infrastructure, a lack of equipment and a lack of maintenance. Twice a business case for upgrading these systems was presented to the former minister and twice they were denied. That was the same minister who stood by while volunteer numbers plummeted, the same minister who did nothing while Rural Fire Service vehicles were ordered off the road due to safety concerns and the same minister who failed to fit safety equipment to Rural Fire Service vehicles that are standard in other states. I honestly never thought that a senior minister or a government in Queensland would put economic benefits ahead of the safety of emergency services workers and volunteers.

The business case from 2017 lists what the project would achieve, and it is two of those criteria that are of specific importance. Firstly, it mentioned a more resilient and available system to deliver mission critical communications. When Queenslanders and their property are under threat, reliable communication is essential—a fact that has been repeated time after time in reviews of major emergencies or incidents. The second and perhaps even more important outcome from the proposed project was duress alerting for officer and community safety.

This is a government that promised to keep Queenslanders safe, but when it comes to emergency services workers and volunteers nothing could be the further from the truth. As reported in the *Courier-Mail*, the most recent business case notes that the current system impacts operational safety, reduces the effectiveness of QFES and hinders its ability to protect and serve the community. This morning the former minister—the person who twice denied the upgrade project—stood up in this place and spoke about this government's supposedly proud record in resourcing emergency services. In comparison, a whistleblower said that the government has buried the significant danger facing personnel and went on to outline that under this government those personnel cannot even access backup batteries or replacement parts for their radios. I will leave it to Queenslanders to decide who is right: a person who responds in a time of need—a frontline emergency services worker—or a government with a track record of failing to deliver for emergency services personnel and volunteers.

Our emergency services personnel and volunteers deserve better. They are being put in danger based on economic benefits. These are the men and women who answer our calls for help. These are the men and women who save the lives of Queenslanders. Today the minister needs to front up to the Treasurer and demand that this project be funded as a matter of urgency.