




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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EMERGENCY SERVICES REFORM AMENDMENT BILL; STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE BILL; MARINE RESCUE QUEENSLAND BILL; DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading (Cognate Debate)

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the cognate debate of the bills before the House. In particular, I rise to speak to the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023.

Where would we be without the many volunteers who do so much for our communities across Queensland. Today I want to acknowledge the great crew at Coast Guard Brisbane. Based in Manly, QF2 is tirelessly out on the water no matter the weather. They do not care if they are putting themselves at risk: if a call goes out for help, we know that we can rely on those volunteers who come to the rescue of boaties in times of need. Out there on our beautiful Quandamooka country in Moreton Bay our crew, QF2, led by Craig Bowen and his team, work tirelessly. I give a big shout-out to each and every coastguard member not only in my electorate but across Queensland. I want to thank them for everything they do to ensure those who decide to go out on the water are safe and looked after if they need a hand.

Currently, marine rescue services are provided by two principal organisations: the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland, VMRAQ, with 26 squadrons and an estimated 1,400 members; and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association of Queensland, AVCGA, which has 21 flotillas and an estimated 1,200 members. VMRAQ and AVCGA are two separate, independent organisations with different structures and different assets, but they do provide similar services. They also place a great reliance on volunteers and local community fundraising to operate. Might I add, they are also subsidised by the Queensland government.

That is why I am particularly disappointed to have heard the member for Moggill's contribution about how these bills are rushed and how difficult they are. We have been doing the Blue Sky Review for some time. This is just another example of the whingeing and whining of those opposite because they do not have anything to offer. All they have to offer is whingeing and whining because they do not deliver anything. I have yet to see a private member's bill. I have seen a blue and yellow pamphlet, which is all they have. I very much doubt they even have Volunteer Marine Rescue and coastguard in that document. At least we are going ahead and doing things to help important members of my community and members across all of Queensland, because this will make a huge difference.

No longer will volunteers have to go out and rattle the tin. No more will they have to call me and say, 'Can you help us raise funds? Can you buy our life jackets for us?' We as a government are supporting them, and we are making sure they are going to have the vessels they need to protect all Queenslanders—that is, each and every Queenslanders. As a government, that is what we will do. We will deliver. As I said, I have no idea what those opposite intend to do with our volunteer coastguard and VMR, because to date I have heard nothing apart from their usual whingeing and whining.

As a consequence of the current arrangements the provision of marine rescue services arises when VMRAQ squadrons and AVCGA flotillas operate in overlapping areas, and this is occasionally unclear. Further, there is a lack of integration between these organisations which may lead to inefficiencies through the duplication of services, assets and costs.

The Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 will establish Marine Rescue Queensland. MRQ will be a dedicated marine service for all of Queensland, in addition to providing other maritime services to government entities and the community. This is a commitment from the Miles Labor government, and it is in response to the Queensland community and consistent with the KPMG independent review of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.

There are many advantages of an integrated, statewide marine rescue service. MRQ will deliver an enhanced service through better interoperability between units. There will also be better clarity around roles and responsibilities for the multiple agencies responsible for providing marine rescue services as well as, importantly, an increase in the quality of services provided by developing standardised training, procedures and policies and enhancing asset management.

In addition to making legislative changes to support and improve MRQ, the Miles Labor government has also provided \$27 million for the establishment of MRQ and other funding will be allocated indirectly to provide corporate support to benefit MRQ and the SES, including corporate support from QPS. These changes will begin from July 2024 and will see the existing VMRAQ and AVCGA transition in stages over a 12- to 18-month period.

The committee report made two recommendations—firstly, that the bill be supported and, secondly, that the Queensland Police Service’s Reform Implementation Taskforce undertake public education and information sessions to effectively engage and inform State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue Queensland volunteers as part of the implementation of the emergency services and disaster management reforms.

The police and emergency services Reform Implementation Taskforce is committed to ongoing engagement with the State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue volunteers, as well as local communities, to ensure the successful implementation of emergency services and disaster management reforms. In addition, the program has established an MRQ Implementation Working Group to assist with planning and delivery and the supporting of volunteers throughout the transition process. This group has met 18 times to date. Information packs and engagement materials have also been provided to units to share with not only their members but also interested community members.

As we lead up to the transition over the next few months, the RIT is committed to increased engagement and education opportunities for volunteers and to deliver additional targeted community campaigns. Notably, there will be some other changes as well. The MRQ Bill 2023 will authorise MRQ members to enter a place without a warrant when performing a function of the MRQ and reasonably suspect that there is a dangerous situation there. That will provide more protections for these wonderful volunteers who, I remind everyone, put their lives on the line each and every day for people that they are unlikely to ever meet. They will possibly only meet them when they are at their worst. I commend all of my volunteers for the hard work that they do for my community. I commend the bills to the House.