




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 30 April 2024

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

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (6.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the cognate bills, incorporating the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill, the State Emergency Service Bill, the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill and the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I note the committee reports recommended that the bills be passed.

Queensland is the most disaster affected state in Australia. The bushfires that occurred last year in Queensland's west were a terrifying reminder of the real risk that bushfires present. The February 2022 floods had an incredible economic, social and environmental impact on many parts of Queensland, including in my electorate where our local creeks flooded substantially, inundating hundreds of homes. Many of our locals had a front row seat to the life-saving work that our emergency services agencies undertake. I had constituents stranded in their homes requiring swiftwater rescues, the SES attended hundreds of homes to assist with the debris and fallen trees, and the police were under incredible pressure to keep up with response calls. We will forever be grateful for that.

Ensuring that our emergency services agencies are designed and supported to respond to the impact of natural disasters is important—which is what these bills will achieve—and it becomes more pressing when we recognise the impact of climate change on extreme weather conditions. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is clear that climate change is intensifying extreme weather events. When we last convened here in parliament, we passed landmark legislation locking in Queensland's emissions reductions targets, strengthening the work set out in the Queensland Climate Action Plan and the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, which maps the state's pathway to net zero by 2050. While we undertake that work, it is still imperative to ensure our frontline services are established in a way that enables them to meet current demands.

These reforms will implement recommendations to the independent review of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the Inspector-General Emergency Management's review of Queensland's disaster management arrangements. The bill will establish Queensland Fire and Rescue and Rural Fire Service Queensland as dedicated fire services under the act. The commissioner will continue to lead the new Queensland fire department with support from senior experienced personnel. The bill establishes the role of the Chief Fire Officer as a statutory position that is responsible for providing advice to the commissioner on matters relating to service delivery, operational culture, best practice and innovation, and research across the fire services.

The bill prescribes that the commissioner, Chief Fire Officer, deputy commissioner, assistant commissioner and other executive and senior officer roles within Queensland Fire and Rescue must have professional firefighting experience, incident control experience and fire prevention expertise

which reflects the necessary proficiency and experience expected in these units. The bill also establishes the Rural Fire Service Queensland advisory committee, which provides strong representation to Queenslanders who volunteer their time for our community.

Thousands of Queenslanders donate their time and their experience to fire and emergency services, supporting our communities in their greatest time of need, and we cannot thank them enough. At this point, I want to also recognise the role of neighbourhood centres in disaster response recovery. I note that both QCOS and Neighbourhood Centres Queensland made submissions to the bill on this, and there is nothing in the bill that precludes our disaster preparation from working with community centres at a local level.

I also welcome the reforms that will require smoke alarms to be installed in caravans and motorhomes across Queensland. We would all be aware of fatal events where, regrettably, those incidents could have been avoided if we had all domestic settings covered by that piece of legislation. The safety of our communities, the safety of Queenslanders, is a priority for our government. This organisational realignment in this bill will ensure our emergency services and disaster management responses are established in a way that meets future demand. I commend the bills to the House.