




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.40 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate for the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill 2023, the State Emergency Service Bill 2023, the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill 2023 and the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. The Community Support and Services Committee, in its reports Nos 40, 41 and 42 of the 57th Parliament and tabled in this Assembly on 15 March 2024, has recommended to the Assembly that these bills be passed. The Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee, in its report No. 8 of the 57th Parliament tabled on 19 April 2024, has also recommended to the Assembly that the Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 be passed.

The purpose of these bills is to progress legislative reform of the Queensland emergency services and disaster management arrangements over two stages. The first stage consists of three bills—the State Emergency Service Bill, the Marine Rescue Queensland Bill and the Emergency Services Reform Amendment Bill. These bills will make the legislative amendments necessary to restructure emergency service arrangements as recommended in the independent review report and they will conform with certain recommendations made in the Inspector-General Emergency Management review.

The Queensland State Emergency Service will be established through the State Emergency Service Bill and will recognise the value of the State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue Queensland members and their service to the community. The Disaster Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is complementary to the legislative reform brought in these other three bills. The overarching objectives of the disaster management bill are to enhance Queensland's disaster management arrangements, to expand the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's functions and to establish the Queensland Fire and Rescue and the Rural Fire Service Queensland as dedicated fire services under the act.

As we all know, Queensland experiences more natural disasters than any other state in Australia. With the growing impact of climate change, the frequency and intensity of these disasters are expected to rise. Natural disasters can leave lasting scars on communities, destroying lives and livelihoods. How emergency services prepare for and respond to these disasters can significantly impact recovery. It is crucial that our emergency services are managed efficiently and effectively, with cooperation at all levels and across all services.

The core purpose of these four bills is to facilitate this effectiveness—to ensure Queensland's emergency services are structured, administered and led in a manner that will uplift their ability to respond to the challenges that lie ahead. The Queensland arrangements for the governance, funding and organisational structure of the SES are unique in terms of the three-way state, local government and SES relationship. In no other state does local government have responsibilities in the disaster arena, nor are they enmeshed in the SES funding and support in a manner similar to the Queensland arrangements. No other states have a partnership funding model similar to Queensland.

This is not rushed legislation. The delivery of emergency services in Queensland has been considered in a series of reviews, including the *Review into volunteer marine rescue organisations in Queensland* published in 2018, the SES review *Sustaining the SES—Partnering for change* published in 2020, and the *Independent review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services* published in November 2021. The *Review of Queensland's disaster management arrangements* was presented to the government for consideration on 28 April 2023.

The office worked with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Queensland Police Service, QFES, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, relevant state agencies involved in disaster management, the State Disaster Coordinator, the Local Government Association of Queensland and other relevant stakeholders to obtain the information necessary to the review. The committee investigated the disaster management bill and it found that stakeholders generally acknowledged the need for reform of the Fire and Emergency Services Act and the structure and administrative arrangements of QFES. I commend the bills to the House.