




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 26 August 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Southern Group State Emergency Service

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (9.22 pm): I recently had the pleasure of meeting with the dedicated volunteers of the Southern Group State Emergency Service at their current depot in Richlands. This group, formerly based at Salisbury, was forced to relocate in early 2022 when their depot was resumed to make way for the Cross River Rail project. The Southern Group was moved to Orchard Road in Richlands, co-locating with the South West Group. While Brisbane City Council staff have claimed the relocation came as a surprise, it is worth noting that, curiously, the South West Group's shed was expanded just prior to the move—expansion that coincidentally made it just large enough to accommodate the Southern Group's vehicles and equipment.

Council staff made multiple public comments that a new depot would be provided within the Southern Group's operational area, but years later those promises remain unfulfilled. What followed instead were mixed messages and contradictory claims. Some suggested a site was in the works; others cited financial constraints and implied that the current temporary solution may become permanent. This ongoing uncertainty has caused real damage. The lack of transparency, the increased travel time for volunteers and the relocation of the depot to the wrong side of the Oxley Creek catchment, in an area with known flood risks, have all contributed to a dramatic decline in morale and membership.

In 2021-22, the Southern Group had around 160 active members. Today fewer than 30 remain. The once thriving Wednesday and Thursday training groups have been disbanded. Compounding the issue is the current structure that places a paid council staff member with no prior SES or volunteer experience in charge as the local controller, leaving the remaining volunteers without a clear voice or pathway to raise concerns or seek change.

This is not how we should treat our emergency volunteers—people who give up their nights, weekends and holidays to keep our communities safe. They deserve better than broken promises, poor planning and silence in response to their concerns. It is time for the Brisbane City Council and the LNP government to step up, provide certainty, restore trust and commit to a permanent, properly located depot for the Southern Group SES. Our volunteers deserve nothing less.