

Question on Notice No. 176, Thursday, 22 April 2004

Mr FRASER asked the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins) -

With reference to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's "Operation Safehome" – Will he outline the program and how it operates?

Mr CUMMINS

Operation Safehome is a flagship program of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, achieving its aim by delivering personalised fire safety and general safety information and advice to householders in their own homes. The service has a strong focus on improving in and around home safety. This program is a practical way in which we can help to reduce death and injury rates from fire and other safety related problems.

In the northern suburbs of Brisbane, which includes the member's electorate, there were 1,951 Operation Safehome safety audits conducted of private homes in the last financial year, and 1,735 smoke alarms installed by fire officers.

Firefighters are welcomed into peoples' homes and very well received in community group settings.

Firefighters provide advice about a number of home safety issues including smoke alarm installation, evacuation planning, electrical safety, security issues, storage of hazardous substances and the dangers of hot water. Householders are provided with a checklist for future reference and assistance in resolving the matters identified. In some instances eg where the advice is of a technical nature, this may require referral of the householder to a qualified tradesperson, or another agency/organisation specialising in a particular issue. Structural fires in the homes of ordinary people of all ages, and household accidents account for a substantial percentage of death and injury to Queenslanders. Operation Safehome assists householders to identify risks, and provide them on-the-spot advice and information.

An Operation Safehome visit can be requested by a householder calling freecall 1800 815 080, contacting their local fire station, or via an intermediary such as a friend or relative or another agency or organisation. The request is forwarded to the nearest fire station for attention, and visits are programmed to provide a free home safety audit by operational firefighting staff. Delivery is by trained QFRS operational personnel while on duty.

Initiatives are already underway to extend Operation Safehome's reach through the Queensland Police Service's Neighbourhood Watch Program and to make the program more relevant to rental tenants, disabled people and members of ethnic and indigenous communities.

I am pleased to advise that Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is currently exceeding its targets for Operation Safehome visits for this financial year. This is a tribute to the men and women of the Service who see fire safety as being equally important in their firefighting role.