

Question on Notice No 975, Wednesday 1 September 2004.

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

With reference to page 28 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements and the enhanced support to Surf Life Saving Queensland, the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association of Queensland and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard – How is the Government supporting these organisations?

Mr CUMMINS:

I thank the Member for his Question and would like to congratulate him on his ongoing strong support for Emergency Services within his electorate.

The Department of Emergency Services (DES) and the Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA) in Queensland have further strengthened their ongoing partnership, with the signing of a renewed Service Agreement in August 2004. The Government is proud to deliver continued financial support for VMRAQ and AVCGA, ultimately benefiting all Queenslanders.

Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland (VMRAQ) and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (AVCGA) are major partners in contributing to the Government's Safer Queensland, Smart State and Community engagement priorities. For that reason, the Department of Emergency Services is very proud to be continuing its financial support of these blue water associations with a renewed Service Agreement for the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2007. Importantly, the renewed service agreement also delivers on the Government's Election Commitments. An additional \$300,000 over three years has been included in the agreement to assist Volunteer Marine Rescue squadrons and Coast Guard flotillas meet increased operational costs.

This three-year agreement specifies that the blue water associations will spend the allocated funding on agreed services such as search and rescue operations, provision of marine safety radio and communication services, medivacs, joint agency training, public awareness and education, training, equipment and materials. Funding of \$6,679,485 (Excluding GST) for the life of the agreement would support the operations of two state councils and 47 volunteer marine rescue bases throughout Queensland.

With regards to Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ), the Department of Emergency Services (DES) and SLSQ have further strengthened their ongoing partnership with the signing of a funding agreement in August 2004. The Government is proud of the agreement, which provides funding over a three year period for the provision of life saving equipment for the SLSQ Life Saving Support Services and Surf Life Saving Clubs.

Surf Life Saving Queensland, which has 59 surf clubs and 6 branches across the State, is a major partner in contributing to the Government's Safer Queensland, Smart State and Community engagement priorities.

The Supplementary Funding Agreement is a new initiative for SLSQ as part of the Volunteer Support Package, and delivers on another one of our election commitments. The initiative provides an additional \$300,000 as capital funding to SLSQ for the purchase of equipment in 2004-07, and will benefit both the SLSQ Life Saving Support Services area and Surf Life Saving Clubs. The SLSQ Life Saving Support Services is responsible for operating several roving Rescue Water Craft (Jet Skis), Jet Rescue Boats, and the SLSQ Communications "SurfCom" Network.

The funds would be a significant boost to the ability of the organisation to provide safer beaches. The additional capital funding will be used to provide a range of resources including rescue, emergency care and communications equipment.