

Question on Notice
No. 668
Asked on 19 April, 2007

MS STONE asked the Minister for Emergency Services (MR PURCELL) -

QUESTION:

With reference to the upcoming changes that will make smoke alarms mandatory in Queensland homes—

- (1) Will he advise on the response to this important fire safety initiative?
- (2) How is the State Government assisting people wanting more information on fire safety and in particular smoke alarms?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Beattie Labor Government is committed to creating a safer Queensland and that is why new smoke alarm laws have been introduced. The risk of death from fire in a home without an operational smoke alarm is up to three times higher than for homes with smoke alarms installed.

It appears that home owners are already heeding advice to make sure they have smoke alarms installed by the 1 July deadline as the number of smoke alarm installations continue to increase.

- (2) The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has undertaken a wide ranging education campaign to advise the community on the upcoming smoke alarm changes and is implementing a comprehensive communication and education campaign. Educational resources have been developed, alongside television and radio advertising, which target many sections in the community, including real estate agents, property owners and high risk groups to reinforce the new requirements.

Work is also being undertaken with major insurance companies so their clients can be advised of the new laws.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is also liaising direct with Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and organisations on the requirements, with specific resources being developed.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is also working with the Community Services and Health Industry Council to review the training package for community aged carers. This will target the isolated elderly, who tend to be housebound and difficult to reach with fire and general safety messages. This group is most likely to receive support from community aged care service providers who regularly visit their homes. It is desirable that training for carers include fire safety

information. Carer Packs are being developed for distribution to carers on fire safety and the new laws.

Approximately one-third of Queensland's housing stock are rental properties, of which 80 per cent are managed by members of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland which makes this group a key sector to target with the new legislative requirements.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ) convened statewide forums in March and April to educate and inform real estate agents on the new legislative requirements. Public forums were also offered to all Queenslanders and external agencies who manage housing stock. The forums were very well attended, with the REIQ helping to get the message out to those members unable to attend.

The Service also offers a number of community education programs to Queensland residents seeking information on fire safety. One flagship program is Safehome. It achieves its aim by delivering personalised fire safety and general safety information and advice to householders in their own homes. This program is a practical way in which we can help reduce death and injury rates from fire and other safety threats.

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 Safehome Pack for reference and assistance in resolving the matters identified. In some instances 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.

Seniors Fire Ed is also delivered by retired firefighters on a voluntary basis. The Seniors Fire Ed program is to help older people reduce the risk of accidental fire occurring in their homes, increase the likelihood of escape and improve the general safety of their homes and its surrounds.