

**Question on Notice
No. 802
Asked on Thursday, 24 May 2007**

MS DARLING asked the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport (MR FRASER)—

QUESTION

Will he explain the measures that must be implemented by operators of residential care facilities to ensure fire safety compliance under the new code enshrined in the *Building Act 1975*?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Sandgate for raising this question.

In response to the Childers backpacker accommodation fire in 2000, the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, in partnership with the Department of Emergency Services, has been working on a whole of Government project to improve fire safety in high occupancy buildings across the State. The first stage targeted budget accommodation buildings such as boarding houses, backpackers and supported accommodation. These accommodation buildings house some of the State's most vulnerable residents. I am pleased to say the project has successfully modernised fire safety in the sector and compliance rates are now very high.

Residential care buildings (including aged and nursing homes) also accommodate some of the State's most vulnerable residents. Many of these residents are elderly and they are unable to evacuate buildings without assistance. To ensure new residential care buildings provide an appropriate level of safety, a new fire safety standard has been introduced to ensure building designers are aware of the special needs of residents.

On 1 June 2007 a new fire safety standard came into effect for *Residential Care Buildings* approved for development. The standard requires all new residential care buildings to have life safety sprinklers, early warning smoke detection systems, and evacuation procedures (including a minimum support ratio) in place.

- *Sprinkler systems* – Life safety sprinklers must be installed in all new residential care buildings to control the development and spread of fire.
- *Early warning smoke detection* – Smoke alarms need to be installed to form a building wide alarm.
- *Evacuation Procedures* – A level of immediate on-site evacuation assistance must be maintained to ensure occupants of the building can be safely evacuated or moved away from the fire area in the event of an emergency. Owners, managers or service providers of a residential care building are required to nominate responsible people, who may or may not be paid staff of the facility, to provide evacuation support to the building's occupants. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service will provide advice on whether the plan complies with the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990* at the application stage.

The fire safety project demonstrates the Government's leadership and commitment to ensuring the safety of Queensland's most vulnerable members of the community.