

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1406**  
**Asked on 7 October 2009**

MR HOOLIHAN asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services (MR ROBERTS) -

QUESTION:

Will the Minister detail the increases in funding for fire services (including rural fire brigades) which has allowed those services to continue to expand their activities to protect Queenslanders' property this summer?

ANSWER:

The Bligh Government is committed to funding Queensland's emergency services, that play a vital role in protecting our communities.

In 2009-10 the Government provided Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) with a record budget of \$433 million, an increase over the previous year's budget of \$35.1 million, or 8.8 percent.

Key initiatives for QFRS announced in the 2009-10 financial year budget include \$22.2 million for nine new or improved urban fire and rescue stations, improvements to facilities at the School of Fire and Rescue Service Training at the Whyte Island Combined Emergency Services Academy, and minor works at a small number of facilities.

Also in the 2009-10 year, new 24/7 permanently staffed stations will be completed at Redland Bay and Nerang. Construction of a new auxiliary staffed station will commence at Agnes Water and planning will commence for the construction of a new station in the Ripley Valley/Yamanto area with an estimated total project capital cost of \$10.7 million.

Savings from the QFRS Efficiency Review will be applied to the construction of the new station at Nerang, a new fire appliance for the station and to provide for the ongoing operational costs of the Nerang and Redland Bay stations. These two new services will employ an additional 38 trained firefighters and station officers and cost an estimated \$4.3 million annually to operate.

Work will also commence or be completed on the redevelopment of a further five stations - at Nambour, Pullenvale, Southport, Kitchener Street Toowoomba and Woodridge - at an estimated total project capital cost of \$19.4 million.

In addition, funding has been included in the 2009-10 budget for the following:

- \$17.2 million to implement upgraded fire alarm monitoring services in over 6,000 commercial premises across the state. This will greatly improve fire and other emergency incident safety for building occupants and owners and enhance QFRS' incident response capability and contribute to a reduction in unwanted alarms;
- \$4.6 million to complete, thoroughly test and commence implementation of the QFRS Operations Management System (OMS), which includes training for approximately 3,000 staff. OMS replaces station management, rural information and incident reporting systems; and
- \$10.4 million for new or replacement urban fire vehicles. The build program consists of 23 urban fire appliances and support vehicles.

QFRS is on target to deliver over 23 urban appliances in 2009-10 as part of the scheduled replacement program for its 492-vehicle fleet. A forward command vehicle valued at \$1.4 million, which is capable of transmitting data to the State Operations Co-ordination Centre, will also be delivered.

The Bligh Government recognises the great work done by volunteer rural fire brigades, highlighted in recent weeks by the sustained fire-fighting effort in the Central region.

The Government has backed its commitment with record funding of \$29.6 million for QFRS Rural Operations. This will allow the Government to deliver training, equipment and other support to the thousands of volunteers across the state.

The budget includes:

- \$1.3 million for Rural Operations to provide on-line training materials;
- \$850,000 to support additional trainers for Rural Operations volunteers;
- \$560,000 for a second set of clothing for volunteers in high priority iZone rural fire brigades and for volunteers who register for deployment outside their region;
- \$540,000 to fund improved communications equipment, additional repeater sites and upgraded rural communications infrastructure;
- \$4.5 million for the construction of 34 rural fire appliances and fire fighting trailers, including the first six of a fleet of 14 heavy duty rural fire appliances, with at least a 3,000 litre water carrying capacity. Each will be equipped with essential communications and bushfire fighting requirements and be located in urban-rural interface zones at a cost of \$1.08 million (out of a total \$2.52 million over the next four years);
- \$100,000 for the purchase of land for rural fire stations;
- \$1.1 million for the upgrade of rural volunteer training materials and the acceleration of rural fire brigade training;

- \$150,000 in capital grants for the upgrade of existing and construction of the new rural fire brigades; and
- \$760,000 in the first instalment of \$4.8 million over four years, for the provision of fire reflective curtains and the replacement of petrol driven pumps with diesel driven pumps in the current rural fire appliance fleet. The funding is part of the \$7.34 million “Support our Heroes” 2009 election commitment.

Rural Operations has increased its vehicle numbers from 876 as at 30 June 2003 to 946 at 21 September 2009. The age of the vehicle fleet has also decreased dramatically. On 30 June 2003, there were 147 appliances over 20 years of age. This figure had decreased to 12 by 21 September 2009.

The number of slip-on units has also significantly increased over the last five years. On 30 June 2003 there were 1,130. By 21 September 2009, the number had increased to 2,314.

After the delivery of the 2009-10 budget, an additional \$0.6 million was provided from the Government’s Climate Change Fund to develop and support a network of 3,000 Volunteer Community Education Officers. The volunteers will focus on raising awareness of the nature and risk of bushfires; measures for preparing and protecting lives, property and the environment; and the timely provision of operational and safety information to the public.

The Bligh Government’s commitment to increasing the safety of Queensland communities is demonstrated by these record funding levels to the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service.