

**Question on Notice
No. 410
Asked on 24 March 2011**

MR FOLEY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR POLICE, CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (MR ROBERTS)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the township of Curra (located approximately 10 minutes north of Gympie) where my constituents have waited for hours on occasions for emergency services to come from Tiaro, Maryborough or Hervey Bay—

When will the Minister's department make the necessary amendments for all emergency call-outs to no longer originate from the Fraser Coast region, but the Gympie region instead?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and recognise the hardworking emergency services staff across the North Coast Region, particularly during the recent natural disasters.

The Queensland Ambulance Service North Coast Region Communications Centre dispatches the closest ambulance on receipt of an emergency call.

The Curra district is situated 19 kilometres north of Gympie and 68 kilometers south of Maryborough. Gympie is the closest station and would be dispatched to the Curra area. However, if crews from Gympie ambulance station are unable to attend, the nearest available ambulance unit will always be dispatched.

This could include dispatching units from Maryborough or the Cooloola Coast (Tin Can Bay) or if required, the AGL Action Rescue Helicopter Service which operates from either Maroochydore or Bundaberg airport.

The Bligh Government has continued to work with the QAS to deliver one of the best ambulance services in Australia, ensuring all residents are covered for emergency medical transport.

Since 2007 the Bligh Government has funded an additional 630 ambulance officers across Queensland, including 75 in the 2010-11 Budget. Of these officers, 13 were allocated to the North Coast Region.

The independent 2011 Report on Government Services highlighted how these extra officers are benefitting Queenslanders. In 2009-10, the QAS provided 56.9 ambulance officer/paramedics per 100,000 people, the highest rate in Australia for that year and well in excess of the national average of 43.6.

With regard to policing efforts, the township of Curra is located within the Tiaro Police Division, part of the Maryborough Police District within the North Coast Police Region.

The Tiaro Police Division has an approved police strength of 4 officers and also receives policing services from district-based units such as the Maryborough Criminal Investigation Branch, Maryborough Traffic Branch and Wide Bay Tactical Crime Squad.

In addition, officers from neighbouring police divisions (from both the Maryborough and Gympie Police Districts) provide support, particularly in emergencies, to policing services in the Curra area.

By arrangement between Gympie and Maryborough Police Districts, the Gympie and Maryborough District Police Communications Centres both take calls for service. The calls are prioritised in terms of urgency and are then allocated.

Local Standing Operating Procedures are in place to ensure that the township of Curra and its surrounding areas receive appropriate and effective policing services at all times.

The Maryborough District has an approved strength of 184 officers. As at 1 April, there was an actual strength of 182. Similarly, the Gympie District has an approved strength of 160 officers. As at 1 April, there was an actual strength of 158. The QPS, like any other organisation, experiences differing rates of staff turnover at any given time. The QPS remains committed to fully funding all approved officers and continue to actively fill any vacant positions.

The crime rates in both districts over the past ten years (2000/01 - 2009/10) are down significantly. The crime rate for offences against the person across the Maryborough District has decreased by almost 20 per cent (18.3) while offences against property is down almost 35 per cent (34.6%). Across the Gympie District offences against the person have decreased almost 30 percent (28.4%), while offences against property are down over 40 percent (43.8%).