

Question on Notice
No. 183
Asked on 26 February 2019

MR S ANDREW ASKED THE MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (HON C CRAWFORD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent bush-fires and repeated requests from rural fire units on various fire grounds to be supplied with P3-level respirator masks—

Will the Minister provide a time frame for when P3 masks will be supplied as standard issue equipment to all Queensland Rural Fire units?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The safety of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) volunteers and staff is paramount.

Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers currently use P2 facemasks in combination with goggles. I am informed the P2 masks filter approximately 93 per cent of the particulates that are in the atmosphere during a fire and meet the Australian Standard. This is the national standard used by volunteer firefighters in all Australian jurisdictions, and these masks will continue to be provided.

However, I am pleased to advise that Commissioner Katarina Carroll, QFES announced on 21 December 2018 that negative pressure masks (P3 masks), which filter 99.95 per cent of particulates, will be deployed to frontline personnel where an enhanced level of respiratory protection may be needed.

QFES will introduce P3 masks on a phased, risk-based approach to the roll-out. The first 500 P3 masks, will be provided so that they can be used for the next Operation Cool Burn and bushfire season. This is in addition to the existing 23 RFBs that have already been issued P3 masks.

The supply and use of P3 masks by volunteers is optional and therefore they will not be considered as standard issue equipment. There are training, safety and maintenance considerations that must be addressed before the masks are allocated to volunteers. Some of the masks will need to be custom-fit to an individual, and that individual must receive training on their proper use and maintenance.