

Question on Notice
No. 517
Asked on 3 April 2019

MS S BOLTON ASKED THE MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (HON C CRAWFORD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to recent changes to the reporting structure and levy boundaries of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services—

Will the Minister advise whether any consideration is being given to the Rural Fire Brigade Association's request for an Emergency Volunteer Respect Act to better protect our frontline volunteers?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government values all volunteers and the sacrifices they make for the Queensland community.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) supports the need to ensure that volunteers in all organisations are provided with respect and there are systems and policies embedded within the department to ensure volunteers have the capacity and opportunity to be consulted and included in matters relating to their welfare and the conduct of their business.

QFES has a number of policies and procedures for the protection and recognition of volunteer working conditions and rights. In addition, QFES has operations, doctrines and business rules that support conditions contained in the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* (the Act). Section 153B of the Act ensures that all volunteers are covered in relation to legal liability where they are undertaking bona fide brigade activities, this includes WorkCover insurance.

In addition to QFES policies and procedures, the Rural Fire Service Volunteer Charter is an agreement between the Rural Fire Brigade Association Queensland (RFBAQ) and QFES, that outlines the principles for engagement with volunteers and QFES' commitment to its volunteers. Also, in the spirit of respecting and consulting with volunteers, the Rural Fire Service runs various Volunteer Strategic Working Group meetings which have a membership that includes representation from volunteers and RFBAQ representatives.

To further ensure the engagement, consideration and support of QFES volunteers, I launched the QFES Volunteerism Strategy in October 2018. This Strategy allows QFES to better meet the needs of its volunteer force through new and more flexible volunteer opportunities and to develop frameworks for QFES volunteer to forge closer working relationships with their local communities.

The QFES Volunteerism Strategy sets out four strategic priorities:

- Embrace: Volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism and deeply embedded in QFES culture and ethos.
- Empower: QFES contributes to engaged, aware and resilient communities.
- Enhance: QFES provides proficient support services to our volunteers and communities.
- Excel: QFES leads through a philosophy of best practice and innovation.

These priorities support the QFES volunteer workforce and guide the development of a future QFES volunteer workforce that is sustainable and capable.