

Question on Notice
No. 1193
Asked on 11 October 2023

MR S BENNETT ASKED THE MINISTER FOR POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (HON M RYAN) —

QUESTION:

With reference to the Data Analysis of Engagement Sessions conducted as part of the RFS Reform Implementation Group where there was overwhelming feedback regarding the challenges in retaining volunteers due to bureaucracy and red tape, and a loss of members due to BlueCard requirements—

Will the Minister advise (a) any changes that will allow the over 26,000 RFS volunteers assistance in obtaining and renewing blue cards, (b) why the original BlueCard application and renewal process for RFS Volunteers from 2020 was changed and (c) how many complaints about BlueCard applications or renewals have been received from RFS volunteers?

ANSWER:

The safety of children is paramount.

That's why QFES staff and volunteers undertaking regulated employment are required to hold a valid blue card in accordance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (the Act).

The QFES Blue Card Team are always looking into ways to better support frontline volunteers through the blue card process.

For example, I am advised by QFES that a recent support initiative undertaken in partnership with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG), saw inter-departmental teams visit QFES facilities to provide on the spot blue card application and renewal services for RFS volunteers.

Subsequent to this successful trial, QFES has continued to work with DJAG and TMR to find new ways to support volunteers with their application process.

In addition, the dedicated QFES Blue Card team is always available to support any Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer directly with the application and renewal process. It is important to note that while QFES maintains this dedicated Blue Card team to assist QFES staff and volunteers maintain compliance with the requirements, the blue card application and renewal process is administered by DJAG.

As such, questions regarding the blue card application and renewal process should be addressed to the relevant Minister.

I am advised by QFES that between 19 June 2019 and 20 July 2023, only seven complaints from RFS volunteers have been received through the QFES complaints process regarding this matter.