

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 33**  
**Asked on 13 February 2024**

**MR S KNUTH** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR FIRE AND DISASTER RECOVERY AND MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES (HON N BOYD)—

**QUESTION:**

Will the Minister advise why the Minister is continuing to introduce the proposed amendments to the Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990, despite the complete rejection of the proposed changes by the Rural Fire Brigades Association Queensland, who represents the largest stakeholder within the QFES?

**ANSWER: [MINISTER FOR FIRE AND DISASTER RECOVERY AND MINISTER FOR CORRECTIVE SERVICES (HON N BOYD)]**

I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to dispel some of the misinformation being communicated to rural firefighters.

The proposed amendments to the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* will seek to:

- establish the Rural Fire Service (with its own dedicated budget) and Fire and Rescue Service as two separate entities;
- provide stronger legal protections for RFS volunteers; and
- give effect to the Government response to the Independent Review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services undertaken by KPMG in 2021.

The Independent Review Report noted at page 104 that, “The implications of not having rural fire brigades formally established under legislation was consistently acknowledged by stakeholders as providing minimal legal protection for rural fire brigade volunteers in the performance of their duties”.

I am advised this was also a concern raised by rural firefighters themselves.

Amendments in the Bill that expressly recognise rural fire brigades as part of the RFSQ will remove ambiguity about the relationship of brigades with the State and therefore will result in an enhanced protection to volunteers.

All State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue Queensland and Rural Fire Brigade volunteers will be operating under a similar legislative framework.

Creating consistency for volunteer participation and support is considered a key factor in establishing a sustainable prevention and response capability for Queensland communities – particularly in communities like the ones you represent.

The amendments in the Bill will achieve this outcome.

There has also been some recent commentary regarding incident control in rural settings.

Amendments will allow the Commissioner to delegate authority to volunteers should first or second brigade officers not be in attendance at an incident to maintain the status quo and add further legal protections for volunteers. Statements that RFSQ members will need to wait for a “red truck” to attend an incident before responding to the type of incident they would usually respond to are false. In fact, the proposed changes provide certainty to the legal status of volunteers in responding to such incidents.

Importantly, the RFSQ Advisory Committee, which has a direct relationship with the Chief Officer, RFSQ, will provide an essential forum for volunteers to raise any concerns about the way in which the legislation is operating.

The purpose of the RFSQ Advisory Committee is to provide greater volunteer access to influence government decision-making through the provision of advice on relevant matters.

All stakeholders will be available to provide further feedback during the committee process when the Bill is introduced to the house.