



Trish Doyle MP

Member for Blue Mountains



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Bushfires and Emergency Services

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I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing this public interest debate to the House today. I also thank and acknowledge the member for Lismore for her contribution to this debate, and even the member for Bega. I know what members are going through as community leaders who must stand alongside survivors of bushfire disasters at this difficult time. I have gone through it myself in the Blue Mountains. In recent weeks I visited the member for Lismore's community and met with her constituents, and I listened to the good people of Drake talk about the pain and devastation they have faced in recent months. But I must take exception with the tone and the politicking that has gone on today and in recent days in this Parliament by the Liberals and The Nationals in Government. The Premier and her emergency services Minister have hidden behind the unfolding tragedy of natural disaster and have refused to take responsibility for their heartless cuts to frontline emergency services—

Mr David Elliott: Fake news.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: You have. There have been cuts. Politicising the bureaucracy is a disgraceful act of base political cowardice.

Mr David Elliott: Politicising the bureaucracy?

Ms TRISH DOYLE: Yes, when you force the commissioner to stand up and say they have never had it so good. There have been significant recurring cuts to the emergency services agencies, and I will go through those cuts one by one.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: In this year's budget we see cuts to the Fire and Rescue NSW employee-related operating budget.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time.

Mr Clayton Barr: I was already on two calls.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Cessnock is now on three calls to order.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: Expenses of \$13.1 million were cut from Fire and Rescue NSW. We see cuts of \$10.25 million to Fire and Rescue's other operating expenses on the same page of the budget papers. That is at page 6-15, for those opposite reading their own copies. As the member for Cessnock pointed out last week, only when we add back in almost \$10.5 million in depreciation and finance costs do we arrive at the final cut to the expenses budget of \$12.9 million. After taking away the accounting tricks, it is actually a real-world cut of \$23 million from frontline budgets at Fire and Rescue NSW.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call the member for Terrigal to order for the first time.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: That is \$23 million from frontline budgets at Fire and Rescue NSW. What is that worth, Minister? If a firey gets paid around \$91,000 per annum, including super, that is about 255 permanent firefighters that could be paid for this year. Did I mention that \$23 million is a recurring cut? That is what they have to find every year in their Orwellian labour expense cap of 1.2 per cent—

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The Clerk will stop the clock. The member for Blue Mountains will resume her seat.

Mrs Leslie Williams: It is under Standing Order 129. The motion states very clearly that we are talking about the Rural Fire Service and volunteers. I ask that the member be brought back to the subject of the motion.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: The member for Blue Mountains will speak to the motion.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: The Government tells us that the Rural Fire Service [RFS] has never had it so good. Of course, it is not just the Rural Fire Service out there on the fire ground.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call the member for Terrigal to order for the second time.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: They do marvellous work, and we must thank them. They do fantastic work, and so many of them are volunteers. Given they are volunteers, let us look at the other operating expenses line in the budget papers. It is page 6-30 of the budget papers, Minister. The other operating expenses line in the budget has been cut by \$17.4 million this year.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Point of order—

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! The member for Blue Mountains will resume her seat. The Clerk will stop the clock.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: This is RFS.

Mrs Leslie Williams: It is again relevance. There is nothing in the motion about the budget or dollar amounts. The motion is about the severe fire conditions we are facing and the efforts of our volunteers. This is not a political debate about budget and dollars. We are here to recognise our volunteers.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. I ask for a second time that the member for Blue Mountains speak to the motion.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: I raise these issues today because as I sat listening to the bombastic nonsense of the emergency services Minister in question time, what I was most worried about was my son. My son is a firefighter.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the contribution of the member for Blue Mountains.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: He has been sent to the front line of the firefighting efforts at the Gospers Mountain fire. I am worried about him because I am his mum, but I am also worried about his comrades. The personal is political, folks. I worry about them because as a legislator in this place I know that it is our job to provide him and them with the equipment, resources and support that they need to do their jobs, to protect our communities and to come home safely.

The ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I call the member for Terrigal to order for the third time.

Ms TRISH DOYLE: The cuts to the emergency services budget reduce the number of firefighters out there on the ground. It has forced those who are out there to work longer and harder. The cuts, Minister, have a real face and they have real consequences.