

**Electorate Office**

125 Brisbane Road

Telephone

07 3202 3452

Email

ipswich@parliament.qld.gov.au

Postal Address

PO Box 98, Booval Q 4304

Facsimile

07 3202 4778

Web

www.rachelnolanmp.com

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DON'T BE A FOOL, CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERY

April 1 is commonly known as 'April Fools Day', but Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is urging Queenslanders to avoid being labelled a fool by changing the battery in their smoke alarms.

Member for Ipswich and Minister for Transport, Rachel Nolan MP, said people need to remember only working smoke alarms can save lives.

"The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) with the support of Duracell is appealing to everyone to not be an 'April Fool' and change their smoke alarm battery on April 1," Ms Nolan said.

"Tragically many lives are lost as a result of people not having working smoke alarms. This makes the cost of replacing your smoke alarm battery as valuable as saving the life of a loved one.

"One in five Australians will experience a house fire in their lifetime and the absence of a smoke alarm can increase the possibility of a fatality by 60 per cent. To escape a fire people need to be awake and only smoke alarms in working order can provide the necessary warning signs.

"It is illegal to not have a working smoke alarm which meets Australian standards installed in your home and penalties apply to those who do not comply with safety regulations."

Ms Nolan said the State Government had introduced laws more than three years ago which require all homes from to have a smoke alarm.

"Since that time the percentage of households in Queensland with an operational smoke alarm installed has been consistently increasing from 72.6 per cent in 2004-05 to 90.1 per cent in 2008-09," she said.

"The Bligh Government has also introduced a rebate scheme for deaf and hearing impaired people in Queensland to purchase warning systems that includes strobe lights and pillow shakers.

"More than 350 applications for the rebate have been approved to date and I would encourage all Queenslanders with impaired hearing to take advantage of the scheme."

Ms Nolan said she was also alarmed by the number of people who take down or remove the battery from their smoke alarm when it was accidentally triggered by cooking.

"These choices can have a deadly consequence and it is important people are not complacent especially when it comes to their own safety and the safety of their loved ones," she said.

Ms Nolan said cleaning and testing smoke alarms regularly goes hand in hand with replacing the batteries.

"Smoke alarms should be tested regularly by pressing the test button and they should also be vacuumed or wiped over at least every six months. Smoke alarms have an expiry date and it is important this is checked as the actual smoke alarm may be due for replacement," she said.

"When it comes to rental properties it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure they regularly clean and test their smoke alarm."

The QFRS offer a free community engagement Safehome program which is available to owner-occupiers and tenants in Queensland houses and units. People can request a booking by calling 1300 369 003 or online at www.fire.qld.gov.au

Media contact: (07) 3202 3452