



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

Hansard 1 June 2000

FIRE LEVIES

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (7.08 p.m.): Last night at about this time I was in attendance at a public meeting in Kawana called to discuss the proposed increases in fire levies in that area from class C to class A. I thank the officers and public who attended. Firstly, I would like to express my disappointment at not being invited to be involved in the discussions at least as early as the local council discussions. The proposed changes originate from a Public Accounts Committee report in 1997 which recommended that the Minister direct the authority to review classes allocated to urban districts and implement mechanisms to ensure continued equity within six months. The operative words are "review" and "equity". The recommendation was not to standardise classes across the board or to effect a huge increase in levy revenue. Similarly, the word "equity" was not, I am sure, meant to be restricted to the levy paid. Surely equity must also refer to the service that is provided to the ratepayer. In Kawana's case, and others such as Buderim, the service provided is dissimilar to that of areas in close proximity to a fully manned station.

Let me make two points. Firstly, the actual service that we receive in Kawana is very good and is substantially provided by our auxiliaries, and I commend them for it. Secondly, I question whether the levy paid should relate to the number of officers in the nearest station, but it does. This is where I believe Kawana and Buderim do not receive equity under the revised system being proposed. Due to the distance in traffic, it takes an average of 8 to 10 minutes to respond to parts of Kawana from the two fully manned stations. Kawana's good service is largely thanks to the auxiliaries. By using the Government system of classes, one could make a strong case for a D levy rather than a C levy. I do, of course, acknowledge and appreciate the value of back-up services.

In reality, Kawana has access problems, particularly at peak hours. These are growing every day through the northern end of the suburb and there is just one road through the suburb. I therefore call on the Minister for Emergency Services not to proceed with the proposal to increase Kawana from C to A and Buderim from B to A at this time and instead look at some other alternative proposals to acknowledge and reflect the particular access problems of those two communities and come back to the coast to hold public meetings in both communities and put those alternative proposals forward.
