



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

Hansard 7 November 2001

TAROMELO RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (10.26 a.m.): Leaving rural residents, their property and 184,000 hectares unprotected has become a major concern of the Taromeo Rural Fire Brigade, and their efforts have been acknowledged by the previous Emergency Services Minister. In the past three months this brigade has attended 48 fires, which necessitated them being in attendance for several days at a time. In the past they have used four vehicles. One was a water tanker, which is essential in an area that is heavily timbered, waterless, tinder dry and continues to face extremely hazardous fire conditions.

I am told that whilst filling another truck on Friday, this water tanker snapped a brake cable and that one firefighter endeavoured to enter the tanker before it rolled into the gully and burst into flames. Luckily he was unsuccessful and was thrown clear. However, the tanker and all the equipment on board were not so lucky and were totally destroyed. We have been told that this essential water tanker will not be replaced until after Christmas. By that time the worst of the fire season will hopefully be over. The brigade needs that tanker now.

It is essential that consideration be given immediately to the plight of this brigade. The brigade still had three vehicles up until Tuesday, when acting district inspector Wayne Witherspool inspected the damage to the tanker and the other vehicles. He confirmed the brigade's concerns regarding the vehicles' condition. He decommissioned the 1979 Landcruiser immediately and asked that the 1983 Landcruiser, which the brigade bought and equipped itself, be subject to a roadworthy, which it is believed it will not pass. Thus, three vehicles were wiped from the brigade's fleet in just over four days.

The brigade now has one Canter, which took approximately 10 years to be delivered. These vehicles were used extensively, and the situation is desperate. I ask the minister to consider the position of these volunteer firefighters who, although wary of the vehicles' dangerous condition, took the risk to protect the area for which they have responsibility. Thirty vehicles are currently being certificated in Crows Nest. It has been reported that nine have not yet been allocated, and I would like clarification from the minister on that. I ask that Taromeo be prioritised to receive one. The water tanker is the only method of getting water to many of the places covered by this brigade. It is essential to the area and does need replacing. This group takes its work seriously—

Time expired.
