



Speech by

Mr T. MALONE

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Hansard 5 December 2001

RURAL FIREFIGHTERS

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (7.20 p.m.): I rise as a proud representative of the Mirani electorate tonight to congratulate more than 100 rural firefighters who battled for more than three weeks to control fires in the Nebo region just recently. They did an excellent job under very difficult and extreme weather conditions; indeed, they were fighting fires on mountainsides, in high winds and in dry weather conditions. It was a real effort and a real credit to those who took part. The Hanrahan family lost a grader to fire and there were some very dangerous incidents during that time. Brigades travelled for long distances; indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker, brigades from your area attended that fire. I am endeavouring to send volunteer certificates to all who attended those fires. They are very brave men who did an excellent job. The support crews, the families and the people who supplied food over that time must also be congratulated.

Homevale National Park is in that area. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers fought alongside firemen to endeavour to control the fires. They have very limited machinery and manpower, deficiencies brought to the fore during those fires. I have real concerns about Homevale National Park, a park covering an area of 80,000 acres of the Homevale station and two other leases. A lot of that land is artificial or imported pastures, and of the whole 80,000 acres only a small amount is significant sites, namely, the escarpments of Eungella Range, Mount Britton and a couple of other sites.

I strongly advocate that the Parks and Wildlife Service reinvest money obtained from leasing back to local graziers some of the property on which there are no really significant sites so that during periods of strong pasture growth that fuel load can be reduced. We need to ensure that when the country dries out the fuel load on properties is minimised so that when there is a fire—and fires start not just from matches but from lightning strikes and in other ways—we do not put all those people in a situation where they have to risk their lives to save the Homevale National Park. The department needs a better understanding of the local conditions, and more machinery and better equipment is needed. I implore the minister to look into this matter.
