



Speech by

CATE MOLLOY

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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FIREFIGHTER ASSISTANCE

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (6.29 p.m.): Agencies from several government departments have worked together to ensure Queensland is fully prepared for the current fire season. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has been working closely with personnel from the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines and rural communities—a whole-of-government approach. DPI Forestry has developed world-class fire response initiatives to limit damage and financial losses from wild fires in and around Queensland forests.

DPI staff receive fully accredited firefighter training and DPI Forestry now has upwards of 400 staff qualified as firefighters located throughout the state. During fire emergencies they can also work with firefighters from other government agencies, including QPWS and local fire brigades. The 2001-02 fire season saw a number of wildfires threaten Queensland's production forests, but all were contained before any major losses occurred.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: That's because we have a fire management strategy.

Ms MOLLOY: I take the interjection from the very clever member for Pumicestone. Much of the thanks for this can go to the Beattie government's extensive efforts to coordinate world-class fire response systems. For example, DPI Forestry has worked with firefighting teams from other government departments and rural firefighting bodies, including firefighters from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. The organisation has developed specific initiatives to limit damages and financial losses from wildfires in and around Queensland production forests.

These include setting up a fire control room in Beerburrum to coordinate responses to forest fires in south-east Queensland, with more control rooms planned for Toolara and Tuan; designing statewide fire responses in line with the world-standard Incident Control System developed in the United States and adopted by many Australian fire management agencies; setting up the Yarraman forestry office as a multiagency fire control centre in line with the ICS standard; developing annual interagency firefighting exercises covering all DPI Forestry regions; entering a partnership with the Queensland Police Service's Crimestoppers unit to prevent arson in Queensland forest plantations; entering a partnership with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Cooloola Shire Council to create a Cooloola Shire Fire Hazard Management Group; introducing aerial prescribed burning in the south-west region, particularly low-flying precision burning in valuable cypress areas which has negated the need for ground-lit burns that damage the pines; and providing firefighting training to timber industry personnel. These efforts have brought about a large, coordinated and highly-skilled interagency forest firefighting resource which will stand us in good stead for the upcoming fire season, which is predicted to be one of the worst since 1994.

The Department of Natural Resources and Mines is also doing important work to assist with fire preparedness. The department recently established a fire detection web site to bolster the state's emergency response to bushfires. This web site assists Queensland's Rural Fire Service to quickly locate and track active fires throughout the state. It is also used by land-holders, natural resource managers and the Australian Defence Force. The web site is a strategic firefighting tool which generates its information from the department's satellite receiving station at Indooroopilly which processes images acquired from three United States satellites that pass over Queensland up to 12 times a day.

Since late 1994 the Department of Natural Resources and Mines has been implementing fire prevention strategies on all land throughout the state under its control. With the endorsement of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines has published a fire management manual which outlines the strategies and procedures to reduce the risk of fire emanating from unallocated state lands and unmanaged reserves throughout the state. Officers of the department form part of the interdepartmental committee on bushfire management.

The role of this committee is to provide a forum for coordination of policy and procedures relating to bushfire management in order to achieve a consistent, comprehensive and whole-of-government approach to the management of bushfire hazard reduction and suppression activities. Selected officers of the department have been given firefighting training and have participated in field exercises and controlled burns within their respective areas. I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister, his departmental officers and all our firefighters throughout this state who do a magnificent job. They cannot do any more than best practice, which is what they are doing at the moment. Congratulations, Minister, and well done.
