



Speech by

# STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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Hansard 24 October 2002

## BUSHFIRES, TOOWOOMBA

**Mr COPELAND** (Cunningham—NPA) (5.42 p.m.): As I rise to address the House this afternoon the terrible bushfire conditions are still raging around Toowoomba and in the Lockyer Valley, as they are in other parts of the state. Latest reports indicate that the conditions on the main fire front spanning from Blue Mountain Heights to Murphy's Creek remain largely unchanged.

A new fire has developed on private property on the southern side of Ravensbourne National Park and authorities are keeping a close eye on this fire. The overall fire situation is of great concern and fire crews are doing their absolute best to control the blazes. Fire authorities are very mindful of the risk of these fires spreading into the Spring Bluff area, which would seriously threaten the residents of the Highfields community.

While conditions are not great at the moment, it is a huge relief that the dust storm which hit Toowoomba mid-afternoon yesterday has cleared. That dust storm sucked the moisture out of the atmosphere and made fire conditions absolutely terrible. In addition, no helicopters could get into the air to check on the fires. I have been informed that helicopters have been in the air today and this is greatly assisting fire crews on the ground.

I would like to take this opportunity to state my unreserved appreciation for the tireless efforts of the many rural and town fire brigades which have been called in to assist. These full-time and volunteer fire crews are doing a wonderful job. I would also like to recognise the work of other services such as the police, ambulance and emergency services, as well as the Toowoomba City Council which are doing a terrific job in the circumstances. My neighbour in the electorate of Toowoomba South, Mike Horan, and I met with them last night and were able to convey our appreciation to them and discuss the situation.

The combined community response has been wonderful and I sincerely hope and pray that we can get some respite from these dry conditions and hot winds to assist fire crews. Fires of this ferocity are a huge threat to communities across the state. Areas in my electorate are terribly dry and are literally a tinderbox ready to explode. A total fire ban has been called for Queensland from 2 p.m. today for at least the next 14 days and I urge all people to absolutely abide by the ban. The fires are, of course, a result of the shocking ongoing dry which continues to grip regions across the state. My electorate has been under exceptional circumstances for some time and is suffering greatly from this continued dry.

This Saturday the town of Clifton has been selected to participate as a live television link in the Farmhand Foundation concert telethon. I believe that Clifton will be the only such link in Queensland and one of only three in Australia. The festivities in the main street will begin at 6.30 p.m. I will be attending the evening, as will the honourable member for Inala, and I invite any member of the House who wishes to come down to Clifton and be part of the night. Clifton is a wonderful community. I urge members to experience its rural hospitality and spend some money in some of the great local businesses which have all felt the effects of the ongoing dry conditions.

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