



Speech by

**CHRIS FOLEY**

**Member for MARYBOROUGH**

---

Hansard 13 November 2003

### **DISASTER MANAGEMENT BILL**

**Mr CHRIS FOLEY** (Maryborough—Ind) (4.49 p.m.): I rise to speak on the Disaster Management Bill, particularly focusing on the SES volunteers. There are a number of those in my community. In fact, Dick Irwin, who is the state president, has written to me on this occasion.

This piece of legislation ensures further recognition for SES volunteers, in particular providing strong employment protection for our volunteers. That is something which is near and dear to my heart. I have spoke before in this parliament about the Main Roads' legal team who said that they wanted some indemnity signed by the SES volunteers. I spoke about that point.

I note that there was a ground-truthing session held on 17 September 2003 which tested the provisions of the draft bill against a number of realistic scenarios. I commend the minister for that. There is nothing quite like actually ground testing something. Sometimes things can look great on paper, but when they are tested it can turn out to be a whole different ball game. Sometimes it is difficult to simulate the level of stress in a scenario when people realise that it is not a real-life event, but ground testing goes a long way towards doing that.

Under 'Declaration of a Disaster and Powers Available', the second reading speech says-

...provides for the declaration of a "disaster" situation at the district level by a District Disaster Coordinator with the approval of the Minister or at a State level by the Minister for Emergency Services and the Premier.

I would ask the minister to clarify at some stage what the situation would be if the minister himself is sick or unavailable. Is the approval of both people needed in both cases or not? I would be grateful if the minister could clarify that point.

Back to the SES, I put a question on notice to the minister this week regarding a volunteer coordinator's position or that contract not being filled. Within 30 days I guess I will—

**Mr Reynolds:** I think you are actually talking about rural fire, not the SES.

**Mr CHRIS FOLEY:** My apologies for that. With a degree of satisfaction I note that under another section titled 'Protection provided by the Act' it says-

The protection of volunteer employment for SES or Emergency Service unit members while involved in performing an emergency or disaster response related function is provided for in the Bill. The Bill includes an amendment to the Industrial Relations Act 1999 that extends this protection to emergency service volunteers including those performing SES or Emergency Service unit functions, rural fire brigade functions, honorary ambulance functions or the functions of a hazmat advisor providing an advisory service at emergencies involving hazardous materials.

I thank the minister for clarifying the situation in relation to rural fire brigades. I note from some of the press releases they have been sending out lately that there is obviously some ill-feeling. I would like to talk to the minister at some stage about the basis of that and get the other side of the story.

Generally speaking, I am very much in favour of the bill and I commend it to the House.