



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 13 November 2003

DISASTER MANAGEMENT BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (5.18 p.m.): I have been listening with interest to the debate on this bill. Apart from the fact that every member who has spoken supports this bill unanimously, there has been one strong theme through each and every one of the speeches and that is the support for members of our SES.

Mr Reeves: It is SES Week.

Mr BRISKEY: I will take that interjection from the honourable member for Mansfield. It is indeed SES Week. As I was saying, one thing that has come out through each and every speech is the strong support that members have—in fact, I am sure every member of this House—for those who volunteer their time and their expertise; those members of the SES who train in their own time and who go out in all weather conditions, and sometimes put their own lives at risk to get on top of high houses in the rain in the middle of the night to put up tarpaulins; who comfort those who sometimes have lost everything; and who provide care and comfort for those in our community who have gone through natural disasters. I, too, thank them. I congratulate them. I do not know where we would be without them. Through their efforts, through their time, through their expertise and through their caring for others, they make this great state the place in which we all love to live. As I say, I, too, would like to congratulate those members of the SES in what is SES Week.

The Disaster Management Bill before the House provides for matters relating to disaster management in Queensland, which encompasses natural disasters, epidemics, terrorist attacks and acts of human omission, such as a failure of essential services. As has been said by many speakers during this debate, we live in a changed environment when it comes to security. There is a contemporary need for arrangements to manage the consequences of horrible events such as terrorist attacks.

As the minister has already pointed out, the bill will provide Queensland with the most modern disaster management legislation of anywhere in Australia. Therefore, the minister and his staff need to be congratulated on bringing this bill before this parliament. This bill will provide a clear framework for the structures, functions and powers supporting the disaster management system in Queensland.

I would like to mention the good work of our state's SES and other emergency services personnel in my electorate of Cleveland and, in particular, the way in which they have been able to assist in many situations that have arisen over the years. I would like to briefly give my thanks to those who worked in the most recent fires on North Stradbroke Island. I know that the minister had the opportunity to go over to North Stradbroke Island during that time and I thank him for that. I was very pleased to see that no lives were lost and no property was lost during those fires. However, when I was talking to one resident of Dunwich I asked, 'How did you go during the fires?' He lived up on top of the hill behind Dunwich. He said, 'I was told to leave my home on two occasions.' I asked, 'Did you get an opportunity to grab some possessions—some photographs or some important keepsakes?' He said, 'Darryl, I grabbed a bottle of red wine on the two occasions that I had to leave.' I think he had his priorities right. As I said, I thank all of those volunteers who worked so hard—not just from the fire brigade but from other areas of emergency services who went over to North Stradbroke Island and assisted.

I am pleased that the bill addresses changes to the management of the volunteer State Emergency Service to ensure that its members continue to play a vital role as a community based disaster response and rescue organisation. I am sure that the distinctive orange overalls that other members have mentioned that are worn by all volunteers are synonymous with a feeling of safety and reassurance in times of need and great distress for many Queenslanders. I am also pleased that this bill will ensure that the excellent work, and very valuable community work, performed by the thousands of volunteers in all of our emergency organisations is supported by appropriate legislation. Also, very importantly, the bill will serve to ensure that people living in isolated communities are afforded the same protection and efficiency of local disaster services.

The contents of this bill will provide a more holistic approach to disaster management, mitigation, prevention and preparedness. I am positive that this bill will enhance the excellent features of Queensland's current disaster management system and practices. It gives me great pleasure to support the bill.