



Speech by

## Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Thursday, 23 August 2007

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### State Emergency Service, Storm Response; Bushfires

**Hon. N ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (10.26 am): I also want to take the opportunity of thanking the many SES workers who have assisted many hundreds of Queenslanders over the last few days. Just to give an update to the House, more than 230 State Emergency Service volunteers have been activated to respond to 199 requests for assistance over the last 48 hours on the Gold Coast, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. By 6 this morning, the SES had received 85 requests for assistance on the Sunshine Coast region. During the same period on the Gold Coast the SES had received 84 requests for assistance and in Brisbane there were 30 requests for assistance. The SES does a fantastic job and we really need to thank it again for its response to that situation.

Despite the rain of recent days, residents across Queensland should be turning their minds towards preparing for the bushfire season. While bushfires can threaten at any time of the year, the dry winter months, coupled with the low humidity and gusty westerly winds which traditionally arrive at this time of the year, increase the threat of bushfires. Due to this increased risk, firefighters have been taking steps in recent months to ensure that they and their communities are prepared for the possible dangers this fire season may bring. Starting in the air, three interstate contract water bombing aircraft arrived at Archerfield earlier this month to join our Queensland based aircraft operating throughout the state. Along with our ability for aerial attack on the fire, the development of an air observation and intelligence gathering capability from above the fire has been a key development in recent years.

On the ground every region in Queensland has conducted exercises practising procedures, and some have conducted major controlled burns to ensure that firefighters are prepared and their systems are well practised. At the tactical command level, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service command vehicles in the Brisbane and south-east regions will be trialling electronic incident action plan technology which was developed with fire services in New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand. This system gives QFRS incident controllers the ability to manage their resources using a computer based system while also providing real-time feedback to senior fire officers outside the fire ground.

At the strategic level, fire incident controllers will be using the greater alarm response system which will assist to provide a structured response as the size and complexity of the incident is identified. Most importantly, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service policy of Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early is being rolled out to communities across the state. With the support of police, our message to the community focuses on preparing their properties and empowering them to make safe decisions when faced with a bushfire.

The recent dry conditions and upcoming forecast, particularly in south-east Queensland and along the east coast of Queensland, may lead to above average bushfire activity this season. This should be a warning to all who may live in or near bushland or grassland to start making preparations now.