



Speech by

# Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEЕ

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Bushfires

**Hon. NS ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.10 am): In the past two months the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service has responded to at least 10 large scale grassfires across the state including at Rockhampton, Beaudesert, St Lawrence and Townsville. Thanks to the hard work of our rural, auxiliary and urban firefighters these fires caused only minimal damage to property, but they serve as a timely reminder of the dangers of bushfires.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service takes the threat of bushfires very seriously and has been planning for this year's bushfire season for months. Three water-bombing attack helicopters have been secured and will be based at Archerfield Airport until October. The helicopters can be rapidly deployed to respond to wildfires within the south-east corner. Throughout the remainder of the state, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Rural Operations has in place a system of on-call-when-needed contracts with providers of aircraft, both fixed-wing and rotary, for air observation and water bombing. Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Rural Operations has also been working with members of the Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires at both the state and regional level to undertake and coordinate hazard reduction burns.

The interdepartmental committee comprises agencies including Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Transport, Main Roads, Queensland Rail and the Local Government Association. It coordinates activities amongst these agencies to reduce the risk of bushfires on government and state owned land. Local rural fire brigades have also been actively working with private landholders to reduce the risk of bushfires on their land. It is important to note that private landholders do have a responsibility to reduce the fuel loads on their properties and to minimise risk to their surrounding communities. I urge any private landholder who needs advice or assistance to immediately contact their local rural fire brigade or fire warden.

The safety of communities across Queensland requires a concerted and coordinated effort from both the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Rural Operations division, government landholders and private landholders. I take this opportunity to thank our 34,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers for their hard work and dedication to protecting their community and others from the ravages of bushfires.

As part of fire season preparations, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service State Operations Coordination Centre has required all regional fire control centres to prepare comprehensive bushfire plans. These plans will incorporate bushfire alert levels for each region and require the running of situational exercises that involve interagency preparation. Bushfire Prepared Communities meetings and workshops are also being held in at-risk communities throughout the state. Some 226 meetings had been held by 30 June.