



Speech by

Hon. Neil Roberts

MEMBER FOR NUDGEE

Hansard Wednesday, 2 September 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfire Preparedness; Queensland Ambulance Service, Appointment

Hon. NS ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services) (10.01 am): During the past two weeks, 22 local government areas across the state, mainly in southern areas, have been subject to complete fire bans because of a very high or extreme fire danger. Our urban, auxiliary and rural fire crews did an excellent job in responding to wildfires, protecting property and lives. Let me place on the record the thanks of the community for their efforts. Thankfully, weather conditions have improved in recent days. However, Queenslanders must remain on alert and continue to prepare for bushfires. No-one can afford to be complacent.

The tragic legacy of Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires in February demonstrates that we need to be physically and mentally prepared for every fire risk scenario. On Sunday while in Bundaberg for community cabinet the Premier, the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability and I received an update briefing from the fire commissioner on the bushfire threat. His advice is that 44 per cent of the state has the potential for above normal fire activity. A further 41 per cent has the potential for normal fire activity.

The QFRS is continuing to progress a range of initiatives to reduce bushfire hazards and to improve the safety of the community. The QFRS works with other government agencies through the interdepartmental committee on bushfires on a coordinated approach to bushfire preparation on public land. It also works with private landowners to undertake back-burning as part of its comprehensive wildfire mitigation initiative. While the QFRS is doing all it can to prepare and respond to any incident, private landholders need to ensure that they have done all they can to safeguard their properties and families.

On another issue, yesterday in this House the member for Mirani used the privileges of parliament to question the integrity of the appointment of a QAS officer who happens to be the partner of a union organiser. The member implied that this officer was appointed to a plum job in the QAS by inappropriate means. For the information of the House, I point out that the officer concerned has 14 years service with the Queensland Ambulance Service and was appointed to her current position following an open, transparent and meritorious selection process.

In his unfounded and unsubstantiated attack on this officer, who is highly regarded within the Ambulance Service as a person of integrity and competence, the member has also impugned the integrity and professionalism of the members of the selection panel who made the appointment, which included the current deputy commissioner, two assistant commissioners and an independent recruitment specialist.

This is just another example of the member's grubby and ill-informed undermining of public confidence in the Ambulance Service and the professionalism of QAS officers. He should immediately issue a public apology.