

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 132

asked on Tuesday, 20 February 2007

MR LAWLOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

With reference to page 11, paragraph three and page 14, paragraph one of the Ministerial Portfolio Statement where reference is made to improved funding for bush fire management on unallocated State land—

How is the department addressing the risks of bush fire on unallocated State land and will he identify the priorities and initiatives to be taken by the department in this area in 2006-07?

ANSWER:

The State has allocated \$2.5M in annual operating funding, for bushfire management on unallocated State land under the control of the Department of Natural Resources and Water.

Management of the risks of bushfire on unallocated State land is handled on a regional basis by the Department's four regions. Since July 2005, twenty-eight specially trained staff have been appointed, and fire fighting vehicles and specialised equipment have been purchased for this program.

The Department has developed regional project plans that are used to identify locations and/or specific properties that require attention. The initial focus has been on addressing risks to life and property in urban and near urban environments.

As part of this management, the Department has actively pursued improved partnerships with other organisations including local authorities, Rural Fire Services, and State Emergency Services.

In addition, the Department has made extensive use of the Queensland Fire & Rescue Services fire risk data. This data, together with the Department's substantial mapping resources, satellite imaging and technical expertise, has enabled the identification of high risk unallocated State land properties for priority attention.

Fire Management Plans have so far been developed for approximately 1200 parcels of high risk properties and 1060 of these plans have already been implemented. Examples of fire management include hazard reduction burns and clearing of fire trails or fire breaks by dozing, slashing or mulching. In the

South East region alone, approximately 450km of fire trails and fire breaks have been established or maintained this financial year, to 28 February 2007. This has been undertaken in locations such as North Stradbroke Island, Tin Can Bay, Rainbow Beach, Noosa North Shore, Bribie Island and around Maryborough. In addition, staff have carried out 160 planned burns and have developed fire management plans for several high risk indigenous communities, including training of local indigenous people.

Departmental staff have also attended over 50 wildfires this financial year, to 28 February 2007.

The Department of Natural Resources and Water was the lead agency for a combined Burn/Incident Management training initiative at Herberton for 70 personnel, including staff from the Environmental Protection Agency, Forestry, Rural Fire Brigades, Civil Aviation and Urban Fire Brigades.

Departmental staff will continue to implement additional fire management plans in 2007 and as part of implementing those plans, will carry out fuel reduction burns and aerial incendiary operations on unallocated State land. The Department will also be involved with establishing and maintaining further fire trails and fire breaks on unallocated State land.