

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 175

asked on Wednesday, 21 February 2007

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

QUESTION:

- (1) What funding has been made available to improve bush fire management on unallocated State lands?
- (2) How effective has the Bribe Island fire management been since its implementation under the Goss Government in 1994?

ANSWER:

- (1) 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 bushfires 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.

Examples of fire management include hazard reduction burns and clearing of fire trails or fire breaks by dozing, slashing or mulching.

- (2) It is imperative in fire management that major land holders, land management agencies, the community and other identified stakeholders work co-operatively for effective fire management.

Since fire management on Bribie Island was first implemented under the Goss Government in 1994, a formalised structure and reference group has been formed.

This reference group is a co-operative effort by the representatives of key land management agencies responsible for fire management on Bribie Island and includes officers from the Department of Natural Resources and Water, Queensland Parks and Wildlife, Caboolture Shire Council, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries – Forestry. The traditional owners are also involved in these fire management decisions.

The group has established an overall approach to fire management. It meets annually to discuss fire management issues. These issues include fire access trail maintenance schedules, development of joint planned burn arrangements, communication and contact plans, resource availability and procedural compatibility.

This combining of resources and knowledge, better utilises the response effectiveness of the agencies. It achieves an improvement in the abilities of these agencies to respond to wildfires through co-operation, enhanced safety for staff and clients, greater access to the fire trails system, increased resource base and joint management of the fire hazards on Bribie Island.

Since the establishment of the Department of Natural Resources and Water's designated Fire Management Unit in 2005, the Department's input and active involvement with this group has increased dramatically. This has built upon the excellent work provided by its land and volunteer staff from previous years.

This year, the unit has established new fire access trails and maintained and widened existing access trails around the townships of White Patch, Woorim, Bongaree and Banksia Beach.

The unit, in co-operation with the other agencies, will see planned hazard reduction burns being undertaken on approximately 100 hectares of unallocated State land this winter, in the hazard reduction season.