

spokesperson, certainly, we are not looking to have a new commercial arm of the fire service out there generating huge revenue streams. The issue regarding clause 7 giving legal capacity for the fire service to enter into contracts to provide training for organisations is really just in response to certain parts of the Territory where there are no commercial providers to provide that certainty and fee-for-service arrangement, where the NT Fire Service can train people within an organisation in fire management. The practice is, in all cases, where there is the capacity for a commercial service or training provider who can provide accredited training modules to work with a company to put fire management training in place. As a fire service, we refer those inquiries to the commercial arena. There are a number of companies who provide that training with very good accredited training modules. However, there are parts of the Territory where those companies do not reach, and it just provides a legal certainty to provide a fee for service. Therefore, no, we are not going out there to compete in the commercial world. Our fire services have plenty of work to do without establishing a new commercial arm.

It certainly will not be compromising core fire services. Our commitment as a government to increasing our capability in this area was the recruitment of an additional 16 firefighters in the Northern Territory during this term of government, and we are well on the way to doing that. The increased financial commitment of \$2.5m to the training efforts of our firefighters as a result of the Métis review shows this government is committed to increasing the number of firefighters in the Northern Territory and also improving their training.

The reality is that the fire service and the work that they do is changing from purely a firefighting force - and they do a great job there across the Northern Territory - to a much more community-based organisation working with the community in fire prevention, hazard management, risk management and much more. We are seeing our fire service work with and in the community.

I pick up on a very contribution from the member for Nelson. It really goes to show that this House can be, as apart from political point scoring, an opportunity for issues to be raised and taken up by government. The member for Nelson's comments about working more closely with people in the rural area, such as the Litchfield Shire Council, regarding the increasing complexities in hazard reduction, back burning, and fuel load reduction as the rural area develops, is something that is a real opportunity with the establishment of the new fire service in Humpty Doo later this year, and the appointment of a station

commander to that particular station, working with the Hazard Abatement Officer, Patrick Skewes.

What I am proposing is that, once that unit is up and running and people are appointed to those positions, we convene a forum with the five volunteer brigades there and Litchfield Shire Council and actually look at those issues that you are talking about. The fire management plans in the region, I am advised, are updated on an annual basis. However, there is going to be a new permanent facility at Humpty Doo and it is an opportunity to pull all of those issues together in a forum. Certainly, you would be invited to that and I will make sure that forum is convened to start looking at those issues. From the fire service's point of view, as to it being an organisation, as the member for MacDonnell says, which has paramilitary functions, we do not operate that way. It is very much a community-based organisation and community controls and solutions to hazard reduction is much better than a strict application and enforcement of legislation and regulation.

It was a good contribution from the member for Nelson and, once we get that facility up and running, and appoint the station commander to that facility, it would be a good time to gather everybody in the Litchfield Shire area who are involved in firefighting, and the Litchfield Shire Council, and look at the way we do business there and if we can do business even better. Maybe that forum can be convened on a regular basis, particularly as we had some bad fires down in the Humpty Doo area last year and lessons were learned from those fires.

I thank all honourable members for their contribution and their support for this legislation.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HENDERSON (Police, Fire and Emergency Services)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

HEALTH PRACTITIONERS BILL (Serial 201)

Continued from 27 November 2003.

Ms CARTER (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, this bill incorporates into a single piece of legislation the *Dental Act*, the *Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act*, the *Medical Act*, the *Nursing Act*, the *Optometrists Act* and the *Pharmacy Act* as recommended by the National Competition Council review of the Northern Territory legislation carried out in 2000. This legislative action is