




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2020

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (3.13 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the bushfire report and also express concerns over the recent fires that engulfed the Gold Coast hinterland. My electorate is close to the Gold Coast hinterland in that it is on the side of Tamborine Mountain. Last year the Australian Defence Force did some large burns through their land in those areas. At the time some residents were concerned about that, but those burns did reduce the fuel load which was extensive in that area.

I thank my local rural fire brigades. I have two great rural fire brigades in my electorate, Guanaba and Coomera Valley. Both of those brigades assisted in fighting the fire in the hinterland around the Sarabah, Illinbah and Beechmont area. A fair few members of those brigades spoke to me of their concerns about fuel loads in those areas and that for many years there was no reduction burns around Binna Burra. The rest is history. As we know, a large fire went through and we are very lucky that there were no injuries or deaths as a result. Their concerns haunt me to this day because there are large areas of the Gold Coast region, for example Wongawallan, which need fire reduction burns. Our volunteers do the best they can by participating in these fire reduction burns but unfortunately they do not have the manpower to participate in all these areas.

It was highlighted in the report from the Auditor-General's office that QFES had not met all the targets it was asked to. This is very concerning for the residential estates which border these forest areas, for instance, Highland Reserve, which is quite a large residential estate, and where I live nestled on the side of Wongawallan hill which has not had a proper burn-off for many years. If a fire ever came down those hills there would be many houses in that region that would be at risk and it would make it very difficult for the rural fire brigade agencies to do a proper back-burn into it. In addition to that, a strong westerly would blow a fire into the estate.

In recent times the rural fire brigade has been doing some fire mitigation burns in the Wongawallan and Guanaba area. Those burns are on private properties. Recently a fire got out of control in the Wongawallan area, which proved that the fuel load is still there. It is very dry in that area. We welcome the recent rain, but if we do not get follow-up rain to keep the vegetation moist that will exacerbate the problem in the near future.

Preventative measures are very important. I have to give the Gold Coast city council its due. It has been participating in burn-offs. I thank their rangers for doing this; it is making it safer. There is so much more we can be and should be doing. We need to make sure that we get on top of reducing these fuel loads close to residential properties around Wongawallan and the Tamborine Mountain area where I believe around 7,000 people live. Earlier this year, before the decent rain we had, some of those forests were tinder dry. With the tonnage of fuel in those area, if a fire got in there it would decimate large tracts of native wildlife areas and also put residential properties at risk.