



Speech by

Hon. Kate Jones

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard Wednesday, 19 August 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Parks and Wildlife Service, Fire Preparedness

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability) (10.11 am): Queensland must be on its guard this bushfire season. This year's tragic Victorian bushfires were a sobering lesson for all states to be as prepared as ever. Queensland can be particularly prone if we are not careful.

With the bushfire season just around the corner, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has been taking strong action to greatly reduce the risk of intense and destructive wildfires in our national parks and state forests. The department is carrying out a controlled burning blitz in a \$5.5 million effort that is building Queensland's resilience.

Planned burns, wildfire responses, fire line and equipment maintenance, fire training and the continuous upgrading of the service's fire management capabilities are all part of the \$5.5 million budgeted this year. Planned burning is a major tool for the QPWS in reducing bushfire risk and managing the biodiversity values of our national parks and forests.

These burns are absolutely necessary to ensure that Queensland is as fire safe as possible—and we have been busy. In the last three years we have carried out more than 800 planned burns over an estimated total area of 1.4 million hectares, and there has been a flurry of activity in recent weeks and more going forward into September. It goes from Springbrook on the Gold Coast to Mungkan Kandju National Park in Cape York. For example, there has been ongoing back-burning throughout Brisbane's D'Aguilar National Park, in my electorate, including a planned burn today, and further south to Main Range National Park.

Parts of Fraser Island were being burned last week. Tomorrow, Mapleton in the Sunshine Coast hinterland will be covered as well.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the interjection. Around Central Queensland, it will occur at Agnes Water, Mia Mia State Forest and Conway National Park as well. Further north it will occur at Bowling Green Bay, Tablelands and throughout the Wet Tropics.

The department has a responsibility to manage the fire risk on more than 12.5 million hectares of land. The heavy rains in many areas earlier this year resulted in a build-up of fuel which means that there could be widespread destructive wildfires later in the year if we do not carry out these controlled burns. All of these actions underscore the importance the Queensland government places on maintaining a balanced approach to environmental and social aspects of fire management on public lands.