




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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**FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (DOMESTIC SMOKE ALARMS)
AMENDMENT BILL; FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (SMOKE ALARMS)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.48 pm): I rise tonight to speak in support of the Fire and Emergency Services (Domestic Smoke Alarms) Amendment Bill 2016. Last week marked five years since Australia's worst residential fire. The fire at Slacks Creek, which is in my electorate of Waterford, took the lives of 11 beautiful people. Eight out of the 11 lives lost were children.

This fire shook my home of Logan and, in fact, the entire state and country. As former premier Anna Bligh said at the time of the tragic fire—

This is another community that will remember 2011 as a year of heartbreak, a year of tragedy and a year when we all had to reach out and look after each other.

After this devastating tragedy our Logan community rallied together to help those families who were affected rebuild their lives. We also vowed to make sure that those lives which were lost were not lost in vain and that any lessons which needed to be learned would be.

The coronial inquest into the Slacks Creek tragedy recommended that all Queensland homes install photoelectric smoke alarms. The coroner recommended that photoelectric alarms were more effective than ionisation alarms. The technology in photoelectric alarms detects smouldering smoke, which is often the first stage of a fire, and can therefore sound the alarm earlier than an ionisation alarm. Photoelectric alarms also send off fewer false alarms, which means that they are less likely to be tampered with or disabled by residents. Following that coronial inquest the Logan community committed to raise fire awareness, implement fire exit plans and encourage the purchase of photoelectric alarms. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services have endorsed photoelectric smoke alarms for some time, and as the experts and the ones who attend house fires regularly we should of course listen to their advice.

While the private member's bill has provided for a staged transition process in the implementation of photoelectric smoke alarms in residential premises in Queensland, it does not implement the other important recommendations of the coroner in relation to house fire fatalities. The Palaszczuk government has listened to the coroner and the experts. This bill fully implements the coroner's recommendations. This includes the installation of photoelectric smoke alarms in homes any time a smoke alarm is replaced or a new one is installed. It also mandates that photoelectric smoke alarms must be interconnected and installed in every bedroom, living room and escape path. Smoke alarms must also be hardwired in new residences, while in existing residences they must be hardwired or powered by a 10-year lithium battery.

Interconnected photoelectric alarms installed in bedrooms will not stop every house fire in Queensland, but they play a critical role in letting people know there is a fire and dramatically increase the chance of people being able to get out safely. We know that a number of house fires start in bedrooms. Whether it is young children playing with matches or lighters or people's electric blankets and heaters, it makes sense to have an interconnected warning system in place in every room so that it triggers an alarm no matter where everyone else is in the house. Having safe and interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms installed in bedrooms, living rooms and hallway spaces will give Queensland households the best and most effective warning system and it will save lives.

Too many people in Queensland, particularly in my electorate of Logan, are victims of house fires. So far this year there have been 83 house fires just in Logan. Late last year my local community was again in mourning when three-year-old Baileigh Cartledge and his mother Crystal Cartledge passed away after fire engulfed their Beenleigh unit. Crystal was an outgoing small business owner in Logan, and now her other two children do not have their smiling mother or their brother Baileigh. Our community is still reeling from this loss. I have been working hard with my other Labor Logan MPs to raise awareness around fire safety. At the end of last year I hosted a successful—and free—fire safety forum with the member for Woodridge. Legislating to phase in photoelectric smoke alarms is the next necessary step, and we owe it to all of the victims who have been lost to house fires to pass this bill.

Two of the greatest advocates for photoelectric alarms are Louie and Christine Naumovski, who are here in the gallery tonight. Louie and Christine run the Logan House Fire Support Network. Their organisation turns up at people's homes when they are most in need: when a fire has broken out and destroyed part or all of their home. These remarkable individuals organise emergency accommodation, arrange new homes and supply furniture and goods, but tragically they often support families and help to organise funerals. Often these fires break out at night when people are sleeping, but Louie and Christine are not sleeping. They work all hours of the night and day, and I know that many victims of fire in our community say they cannot put into words how lucky they have been to have these two heroes. Louie and Christine have sat in my office many times after a fire and pleaded with me to enact the recommendations from the Slacks Creek coronial inquest and legislate for interconnected photoelectric smoke alarms. Well, Louie and Christine, here we are! Louie and Christine have some of the biggest hearts in Queensland, and the reason we have this bill in the House is largely due to their advocacy. They should be so proud of their work and their advocacy; they certainly are some of the most persuasive lobbyists I have ever met.

The Palaszczuk government is leading by example in introducing this important bill. I also want to thank the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Bill Byrne, for his work in this area, also Minister Mick de Brenni. I want to thank my fellow Logan Labor MPs Cameron Dick, Linus Power and Leanne Enoch for joining me in pushing for this reform. I am also proud that within five years the Palaszczuk government will see 72,000 state government owned housing properties fitted with smoke alarms which meet the new safety standards. I again give a massive thank you to Louie and Christine from the Logan House Fire Support Network for never losing sight of their goal of all Queensland homes having these lifesaving alarms.

This bill will not stop house fires, but it does equip homes with the best possible warning device, which will in turn prevent the loss of lives here in Queensland. That is something all parliamentarians in this place have a responsibility to vote for. I commend the bill to the House.