




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Yellow Ribbon Day

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.54 am): Today I would like to recognise the dedication of our volunteers, the rural fireys who keep our families safe over summer. We know this will be a very long, hot summer. We have already started to see the effects of that with a significant fuel load, even after a relatively dry winter. Already this year we have had many fires throughout my electorate as well as throughout Queensland.

Today is Yellow Ribbon Day. It is a chance to celebrate and thank our 36,000 Rural Fire Brigade volunteers across Queensland. We have 1,440 brigades across the state. They protect our communities across approximately 93 per cent of Queensland. This year Yellow Ribbon Day holds special significance for all firefighters as Tuesday, 10 October 2017 is also National Firefighters Remembrance Day, a day to remember all firefighters whether full-time, part-time or volunteer. I would like to acknowledge all the fireys who protect our communities across the state.

As an example of this, we have already seen in this early part of the season some serious fires with crews kept busy in my patch from early September fighting major fires at Wattle Camp and Boobie, Cherbourg, Taromeo, Blackbutt, Benarkin, Elgin Vale, Ballogie, Wondai, Nanango, Esk, Toogoolawah and Biarra. The Wattle Camp fires were particularly destructive and residents were evacuated. There are too many volunteers and personnel to thank, with over 22 Rural Fire Service crews involved, nine fire and rescue crews, 10 SES personnel, six QPS personnel and three QAS who were on site as well as several private contractors. These crews ensured there was no loss of infrastructure or life.

I would also like to mention the Taromeo Rural Fire Brigade, who did us proud. The crew had been entertaining the crowds at the annual Blackbutt Avocado Festival but had to ditch their fancy dress costumes when a fire alert came in from their local area. That is why a Nicholls LNP government will provide greater funding certainty to our hardworking emergency volunteers. Our hardworking volunteer organisations currently receive partial government assistance, but they rely significantly on community support and generosity to provide the services that Queenslanders rely on in an emergency event. The LNP will boost government support, and we have already announced the LNP will establish a dedicated \$10 million emergency volunteers fund for which organisations can apply to receive assistance to improve local community resilience and maintain or increase capacity.

I would also like to follow on from the contribution made by the opposition leader. Unlike Labor, the LNP has a plan to build the roads, bridges and dams we need. We also want Queenslanders to get ahead. To help them we will create the jobs across Queensland by better managing our finances through our Get Queensland Working plan to help 20,000 young people get a job. Disgracefully, youth unemployment in the regions—in Townsville, just one example, it is at 21.4 per cent. That means there are 4,700 people there who cannot get a job. Sadly, this figure would be even higher if 5,000 young people in Townsville had not given up looking for work since Annastacia Palaszczuk was elected.

Our plan is not just for young Queenslanders. We have announced a new deal for regional Queensland that ensures people in the regions do get their fair share. In conjunction with the private sector we will build a new low emissions, high-tech coal-fired power station so we can all have affordable electricity including families and businesses in the north. We do have a plan to put downward pressure on power prices, unlike Annastacia Palaszczuk and the Labor government. The only plan that they have is to tell everyone to turn their air conditioners up to 26 degrees. The incompetence of this Labor government is just incredible.

Labor also opposed the plan to build this coal-fired power station in North Queensland. The Premier has said that the market is not interested, but we have already had three private sector proponents who are interested in building the LNP's coal-fired power station in the north. Only the LNP has a plan to build a better Queensland.