




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, International Deployments

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.56 am): I would like to put on record my admiration for the efforts of all our QFES staff and volunteers who have been kept busy with what is shaping up to be an extremely active and prolonged bushfire season. Hundreds of our personnel have already been involved fighting more than 1,000 vegetation fires across the state in the past week—maintaining the upper hand in the battle to safeguard lives and property.

Apart from the tremendous work of all involved, the fires unfortunately are a clear sign the 2018 season, which officially began on 1 August, is about four to six weeks ahead of schedule. We are talking about conditions very different to what we would normally experience at this time of year. The combination of prolonged dry conditions and high fuel loads means the state is at risk of a long, active bushfire season.

I would also like to recognise the terrific work being done by our 13 QFES personnel involved in the international emergency response to devastating wildfires in the United States and Canada. Eleven QFES representatives were among fire specialists from across Australia and New Zealand who left for the US west coast earlier this month to assist with the firefighting effort. Another two highly trained QFES personnel have deployed to Canada, joining an international contingent of fire specialists fighting wildfires in British Columbia. It is a huge credit to our QFES personnel and demonstrates the strong and respectful relationship we have within the international firefighting community.

The situation is constantly evolving so we want to help as much as we can. QFES personnel will facilitate many roles, including managing tactical implementation and resources at the fire front as well as being responsible for fire ground personnel. As we would expect, our people have certainly been hard at it—with those deployed in the US due to finish 10-day shifts in hot spots including the Mendocino Complex fires. Tragically, an American firefighter lost his life battling this massive blaze, which has burned through more than 360,000 acres.

QFES personnel understand the dangerous impact natural disasters have on a community, and I know they will provide a first-class emergency response. As for their loved ones back home, QFES is maintaining close contact with overseas agencies to ensure families of the deployed crews are kept well informed on their activities. These deployments are something QFES carefully plans for in an operational sense, ensuring our specialist resources are maintained when these firefighters are sent overseas.

The Palaszczuk government—and QFES—is committed to keeping Queenslanders safe. Queensland is often at the mercy of extreme weather events, and time after time our highly skilled Fire and Emergency Services staff and volunteers have responded swiftly and effectively when disaster strikes.

Unlike other government organisations, QFES is an emergency response organisation and cannot provide its service to Queenslanders only based on rostered shifts. QFES predeploy staff prior to significant weather events and staff remain on site until the emergency has passed. When QFES crews attend emergencies such as a fires or accidents, they remain on site until it is safe to leave. They do not simply withdraw at the end of their shift. Instead, they stay until the job is finished or they are relieved.

I am very proud of all our crews not only for what they do here in Queensland but also for the assistance they have given to New South Wales, as well as what they are doing overseas. We are a world-class service. My thoughts remain with those personnel who are currently on the fireground overseas and those back home here continuing to battle bushfires.