




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services; Lemke, Mr B

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.07 am): I am proud and relieved to say that 13 QFES personnel deployed to the US and Canada to battle deadly wildfires will be coming home in the next few days. Eleven of them will be returning from California this Saturday. They were amongst 188 fire specialists from across Australia and New Zealand who travelled to the US west coast early last month to assist with the firefighting effort. A further two QFES personnel who are currently in Canada helping firefighters battle a series of infernos in British Columbia are scheduled to return home early next week. As members would expect, the emotions will be running high when they touch down in Brisbane after their five-week stint. QFES has been maintaining very close contact with their agencies overseas to ensure that their families at home have been kept well informed of their activities.

Our firefighters played a vital role in relieving American and Canadian crews who were exhausted after having spent many months battling wildfires on a scale that we can barely imagine. Over the last 37 days they have been working a 14-day-on, two-day-off roster putting in 12-hour shifts every single day for the duration of their stay. They were deployed into several hotspots including the massive Mendocino complex fire where tragically an American firefighter lost their life. That fire is the largest in the US this year. It has burned through more than 185,000 hectares and has destroyed 157 homes and another 123 structures. QFES regularly and proudly participates in international deployments and has developed strong and mutual supportive relationships with partner agencies across the globe. A combined US and Canadian deployment debrief will be held in the coming weeks to consolidate the experience and knowledge learned from the response efforts.

I want to put on the record my admiration for the efforts of all of our QFES staff and volunteers, who have been kept busy in Queensland this bushfire season. I would like to make special mention of the bravery of QFES Brisbane Region Station Officer Brian Lemke, who was honoured this week by the Governor of Queensland, the Hon. Paul de Jersey. Station Officer Lemke received his commendation for brave conduct for his efforts in working with a woman who crews feared was going to jump from a shopping complex roof at North Lakes on the morning of 6 February 2015.

Station Officer Lemke volunteered to approach the woman but, after he climbed onto the roof and offered to help her down, she suddenly refused his requests and began to lean forward. Without hesitation, and despite the risk of falling, Station Officer Lemke grabbed the woman and pulled her back onto the roof. He held her until other emergency service personnel arrived and moved her away from the edge. Station Officer Brian Lemke is yet another tremendous ambassador for the world-class service afforded to all Queenslanders by our dedicated QFES personnel.