



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**


**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2019

**MOTION**

**Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Inquiry**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (5.29 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Gregory. Thank goodness he has moved this motion because those members opposite do really need a lesson when it comes to fire management.

There needs to be a parliamentary inquiry into the Queensland bushfire prevention and preparedness activities leading up to the 2018 Queensland fires. Landholders and Aboriginal people cannot continue to suffer losses as a result of the mismanagement of this Labor government. I am pleased to see the Minister for Environment is here to hear this.

Families cannot continue to suffer losses. I extend my sympathies to the family of the man who was killed in the Carnarvon National Park fire. We cannot afford to keep losing the young people in our communities like this. We cannot allow this Palaszczuk Labor government to continue to destroy Aboriginal art and private property with their lack of fire preparedness. The decision-makers need to be held accountable.

At a fire last year in the Carnarvon National Park, which is well known for its Aboriginal paintings which cannot be replaced, Aboriginal paintings were destroyed. Indigenous people have every right to be outraged at this loss. It is their heritage. The Baloon Cave was the only location available in this park for viewing rock art for the elderly and infirm. I table for the information of the House the photographs of the bushfire destruction at the Baloon Cave. One shows the cave beforehand. The other shows what it looks like now.

*Tabled paper:* Photograph, undated, depicting Baloon Cave, Carnarvon National Park [[166](#)].

*Tabled paper:* Photograph, undated, depicting Baloon Cave, Carnarvon National Park damaged after a bushfire in 2018 [[167](#)].

It is absolutely blackened—absolute shame. How much more irreplaceable Aboriginal art has to be destroyed by this Labor government before they will listen.

There was another bushfire that was caused by a lightning strike before Christmas Day in the Lonesome National Park. It is neighboured by commercial grazing properties. National park staff walked away from this active fire over the Christmas period. Consequently, it burnt out the neighbours' properties. One neighbour lost 15,000 hectares to this fire.

Bridget Price and her mum, Janet Behan, worked frantically to get help from friends and neighbours around the Injune and Arcadia Valley area. These volunteers went willingly to help them and their neighbours. Bridget Price has made it public on a number of occasions that the areas burnt would not have been so great if national parks back-burned earlier and employed more controlled burning strategies in the cooler months. Some of the Lonesome National Park has not been burnt for 20 years.

There is also a cultural problem in national parks. The attitude is that once it burns out of the national park it is no longer their problem; it is the private neighbour's problem. We unfortunately had parks staff who were saying that to people in the community. It is further disappointing that the Labor government stopped the national parks staff from attending the fire debrief that was held on 8 February. They would not let them go. I thank the member for Gregory for attending that meeting. Thank goodness he actually went because the government did not allow their staff to attend. It would have been valuable for that community to have the national park staff in attendance.

Local landowners and their families battled this fire over Christmas. They did not get a break. They did not have fatigue breaks like the national park staff, who walked away leaving no replacement personnel, did. Everybody had gone on leave and left. It was the local volunteers and the landowners who had to manage the fire and prevent it from destroying their private properties during the Christmas and New Year break.

There is nothing wrong with a fatigue management policy provided the government has provided the financial and staffing resources to fulfil their duty of care. On this occasion the Palaszczuk Labor government did not fulfil their responsibilities around that fatigue management policy.

This is difficult terrain. The region needs clear, wide firebreaks—narrow breaks are dangerous. At one stage there was a 12-kilometre firebreak that had to be back-burned to try to contain this fire. That firebreak is longer than some of the electorates in Brisbane are wide or long.

We need this parliamentary inquiry to look at the Palaszczuk Labor government's backyard and hold the decision-makers to account. This has to happen. I urge members to support this motion, because families like the Price family and many others do not want to see a repeat of the mistakes during 2018.