



Speech By  
**Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk**


**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Bushfires

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.33 am): Vast areas of Queensland have been gripped by devastating fires over the past fortnight in what has become a sadly familiar phenomenon for our state. Several communities have been left physically scarred by these frightening and destructive fires. While they will rebuild, the emotional scars will surely take longer to heal. Today I want to announce the steps my government will take towards helping those communities get back on their feet and how the dedicated recovery effort will help those who were directly affected.

The fire emergency has affected 55,000 hectares of land with more than 600 community warnings issued in the past two weeks. Seventeen homes in the Gold Coast hinterland, the Southern Downs and the Sunshine Coast regions have been lost. In response today I announce that Mr Ian Stewart will be appointed the State Recovery Coordinator to ensure communities and Queenslanders who have been affected receive the help toward recovery that they require.

My government is acting as quickly as possible to ensure that the recovery begins immediately, and Mr Stewart will play a critical role. Mr Stewart will be on the ground to ensure all recovery efforts flow to the regions where they are most needed. Mr Stewart is well placed to perform this role after serving in the Queensland Police Service for 46 years including as Police Commissioner. During his long and distinguished career he acted as State Disaster Coordinator during Cyclone Yasi and the devastating Toowoomba, Grantham and Brisbane floods in 2011. In his role as commissioner, Mr Stewart also experienced Cyclone Marcia, Cyclone Debbie and the 2018 bushfire event across Central Queensland. Acting Senior Sergeant Darren Ward will assist Mr Stewart with recovery coordination. Sergeant Ward from Jimboomba has been on the ground throughout this emergency and was instrumental in evacuating residents from Timbarra Drive in Beechmont as the fire that would claim 11 homes approached the region.

Today I can also announce immediate support for Gold Coast hinterland and Scenic Rim tourism operators to help them get back on their feet. My government will provide a \$1.2 million partnership with the O'Reilly family to deliver a major redevelopment of the Green Mountain Campground at Lamington National Park and \$1.5 million to partner with Binna Burra Lodge to build Australia's first permanent climbing course. These two initiatives are in addition to tourism campaigns my government will launch in coming weeks to ensure visitors understand that despite the fires, the affected regions remain open for business.

Further, we are providing emergency hardship assistance grants to cover the cost of essential items such as food and clothing for people directly impacted by this disaster. Disaster recovery funding arrangements have been activated in four local government areas including the Scenic Rim, Southern Downs, Noosa and the Sunshine Coast. To date more than \$351,000 in personal hardship assistance has been paid, benefitting more than 1,900 people. As honourable members can see, the money is getting out the door quickly.

With the support of the federal government, my government has extended disaster assistance to primary producers, small business and not-for-profit—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, I had to warn the House yesterday about general conversation. Can you please keep that to a minimum or take your conversations outside. It is time for ministerial statements.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are talking about bushfire recovery.

**Mr Bleijie:** So are we.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It did not sound like it.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Thank you, Premier. Thank you, member for Kawana. Cease your crossfire.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** With the support of the federal government, my government has extended disaster assistance to primary producers, small business and not-for-profit organisations impacted in the Southern Downs and the Scenic Rim regions. This includes concessional loans of up to \$250,000, essential working capital loans of up to \$100,000 and freight subsidies of up to \$5,000 for movement of stock, feed, machinery, fuel, water and building materials. At the local level, community recovery hubs remain open at Stanthorpe, Canungra, Peregian Beach and Beechmont.

I encourage residents to attend a hub or call the Community Recovery Hotline on 1800173349 where staff can assist with accessing grants and a range of additional support services. In relation to that I spoke to some people on Sunday and they were unsure where they could go to get this help, so I will repeat that Community Recovery Hotline number: 1800173349. Further, my government will task the statutorily independent Inspector-General Emergency Management to review the recommendations made in 2018 in light of the recent bushfire event to ensure that we have the best advice about our capability to effectively respond to the bushfire threat.

This is the first time this bushfire season that we have experienced conditions like this. While we are focusing on community recovery, the bushfire season will be with us for several months. It was good to see a little bit of rain last night. We even saw some of the fireys out there celebrating that rain, especially around that Gold Coast hinterland region.

Today QFES is monitoring a bushfire on North Stradbroke Island about four kilometres north of East Coast Road, west of the Peat Mine Track. This is a large, slow-moving fire in an inaccessible swamp area approximately two kilometres from a traditional owners area. Police are evacuating residents from this camp. I urge all Queenslanders to remain vigilant in the days, weeks and months ahead and heed the advice of authorities.