




Speech By
Colin Boyce

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2019

MOTION

Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Inquiry

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (5.19 pm): It is wonderful to hear that the member for Gladstone follows my Facebook page. Unfortunately, I have never seen his.

I rise to support the motion put forward by my colleague Lachlan Millar, the member for Gregory, calling for a parliamentary inquiry into the Queensland government's bushfire prevention and preparedness activities. In late November and early December last year, we saw Queensland set alight as devastating bushfires completely burnt out over one million hectares of state owned lands, private lands, national parks and forests. It was a catastrophic event with extensive loss to property, infrastructure, grazing land and the environment.

The bushfires highlighted the fact that the management of our state owned lands, parks and forests has been lacking. For many years there has been little or no maintenance of firebreaks and access roads to and in those places. There has not been enough managed maintenance burning to reduce fuel loads in our Crown lands and parks, which added to the ferocity and devastation that the fires caused. We have much to learn from these events, which is why we must have this inquiry.

I have toured many of the affected areas in the electorate of Callide. I made a short video with a local landholder, Mr David Marland, whose grazing property adjoins the Bulburin National Park near Gin Gin. In the video, Mr Marland speaks of the devastation that the fires caused in his local area. The forest is now a blackened and charred ruin. When you see it firsthand, the most overwhelming thing you notice is the eerie silence. There is nothing. There is no birdlife. There is no grass. There is absolutely nothing. All of the creatures have perished.

In the video, Mr Marland points out that he has made repeated attempts to get permits to implement controlled burning practices to reduce the build-up of fuel loads on his leased country adjacent to the state owned park and forest. Those applications have been rejected or ignored by the relevant government departments. That is an outrage. It shows the indifference and total disregard that the government departments have for a lifetime of knowledge gained by people who live on and manage that land.

Our short video went viral on social media. It reached over 600,000 people and had 323,000 views. It was the catalyst for the federal government inquiry. Recently I also learned that the Rural Fire Service has used the video as a training tool to highlight the importance of local practical knowledge. Those opposite need to watch the video. They will learn more in four minutes than in four hours of bureaucratic meetings. This morning I heard the Premier tell the House that she takes advice from experts. She needs to listen to Mr Marland; he is an expert.

There have been some practical results. Local graziers who have leases in the Barakula State Forest north-west of Chinchilla in the Callide electorate have told me that the fire trails and access tracks are now being graded. Some of them had had no maintenance for up to 35 years.

Fire is the most important tool we have to mitigate against catastrophic fire. We must implement a strategy of regularly burning our forests at the appropriate times to reduce the fuel loads that they carry. That will help stop the damage caused by huge firestorms in forests that have not been burned for many years.

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Please resume your seat, member for Callide. Member for Gladstone, I ask you to return to your seat if you wish to interject. I remind all members that if the member is not taking interjections I will cut all of you down and I will hear the member's contribution.

Mr BOYCE: On behalf of the people of Callide, I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude and thanks to the rural fire brigades and all the volunteers who do what they can to manage and fight devastating fires throughout Queensland. I urge the House to support this motion so that, through an inquiry, we may develop better ways to mitigate and plan for such events when they happen.