




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Red Balloon Day

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.07 am): Today is National Red Balloon Day—a day dedicated to saying thank you to the men and women who daily fight fires. They keep us safe from fires and they perform duties most of us quite frankly neither have the skills nor the courage to perform. In the past four months our firefighters have been tested in a way that they have never been tested before, and they were not found wanting. For nine days between the end of November and the beginning of December they dealt with more than 1,200 fires across Queensland. At one point there were more than 200 burning at the same time, but yet they fought on. But they do so much more. They save lives. They save homes. They work alongside our police and our paramedics at the scenes of horrific car crashes. They give puppies CPR—and I am sure Raven the puppy will be eternally grateful—and they really do rescue cats from trees.

During our last term in government we delivered 153 new fire appliances and equipment for our crews. Since the end of 2017, another 120 front-line fire appliances and equipment have been delivered, with more than another 100 due by the middle of this year. We promised 100 new firefighters across the state in four years, and we are halfway there. In fact, I am very proud to announce that today in Townsville we have a new recruit course beginning. From today 29 people will now call themselves a firefighter as they go through the Townsville academy, which we have not used for a number of decades. They join the existing 32 recruits who are currently at Whyte Island undertaking their recruit course, so there are around about 60 new firefighters going through their recruit training as we speak.

They join more than 2,500 paid firefighters and support staff, more than 100 rural fire officers and almost 1,500 Rural Fire Service brigades across the state. We have more than 34,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers. Together with the private industry firefighters, aviation firefighters, forestry firefighters and Defence firefighters, each and every one of them is helping to keep Queenslanders safe. On behalf of Queensland, I thank every single one of them.