



Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2019


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, Report

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (5.08 pm): I welcome the opportunity to endorse and comment on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report to parliament. I want to thank the chair, the members of the committee and the secretariat for their hard work. The Palaszczuk government has been and will continue to be committed to doing everything we can to ensure the safety of Queenslanders. Nowhere in Australia is the public more at the mercy of natural disasters than right here in Queensland. That is why we have the best emergency services teams in the world. It is also why the Palaszczuk government are focused on maintaining their high standards.

Queensland is growing and the operational response of our emergency services needs to grow with it. I want to mention the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group meeting that I attended in Cairns last week where our Urban Search and Rescue Team, AUS-1, was hosting its colleagues from around the world. This is a world-class Queensland based urban search and rescue team—the type of team that responds internationally to earthquakes, tsunamis and cyclones like those that occurred at Christchurch and other places. You name it, that team is out there, three months on notification for a two-hour response anywhere in the world and three months off when the New South Wales team fills that void. Australia has been part of the regional INSARAG network for several years, with Queensland's disaster assistance response team recognised as a leader in the field, with the capability to be deployed overseas to help in times of crisis and to provide training to countries such as China to gain international accreditation. This is one example of a range of world-leading capabilities that QFES delivers.

That brings me to the opposition's statement of reservation—statements that my department batted off questions, statements that my department refused to take ownership, statements that my department used excuses peddled by QFES. Wrong, wrong, wrong. When the members opposite signed that statement of reservation, they attacked the professionalism and credibility of every single member of QFES—its commissioners, its senior officers, its staff and its volunteers.

I refer to Rural Fire Service funding. In 2018-19, 119 rural appliances were delivered and in 2019-20 a further 25 will be delivered. That will mean an average of 58 vehicles for our Rural Fire Service for every single year of this Palaszczuk government. Let me compare that figure to the figure provided by those opposite: 33. I will say the numbers again. There were 58 from us and 33 from them.

Those figures do not include the full increase in our investment in rural firefighting in this state. As outlined in the budget papers, additional funding has been provided to QFES that contributes to the Rural Fire Service response and delivery capacity. That includes \$26 million to upgrade the radio network. A major beneficiary of this upgrade is our rural firefighters. That funding also includes \$457 million over 15 years in relation to the government wireless network from which, again, the Rural Fire Service benefits.

This year's fire season is already underway. The cool-burn period has ceased. The fire season is very much with us right now. In fact, in the last few days we have seen some significant fire developments around this state—certainly in the Gladstone region, the Bundaberg region and out the back of the Gold Coast. QFES is very mindful and very concerned about it.

In addition, last night on the north coast 100 of our volunteers from the SES and the Rural Fire Service searched unsuccessfully for that missing three-year-old. At the same time not too far away a further 50 SES members are searching for a 14-year-old. In the last few days there have been cliff-top rescues in the south-west and on the north coast. In the last couple of minutes I have heard that, in my electorate, six crews are working on the side of the Kuranda Range trying to stabilise a vehicle that is 50 metres down an embankment.

Labor backs our fire and rescue, Labor backs our Rural Fire Service, Labor backs the SES and Labor backs our marine rescue. Labor would never sign a deplorable statement of reservation like those opposite did.