




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.08 am): I am pleased to update the House on the work of our QFES fireys, our volunteers and our staff and the support that this government provides to our frontline officers. Firstly, overnight I was advised that a volunteer firefighter from Western Australia, who came to help fight fires in the Bundaberg region, was viciously attacked by a member of the public. Although his injuries are minor and he is going home today with the rest of his team, it was a despicable act. The attacker has been charged and, obviously, will face the full force of the law. I will be contacting the Western Australian minister today to offer our support.

As of this morning, there are 35 active fires, which means that, since the commencement of this bushfire event on 4 September 2019, there have been 1,545 active bushfires across the state. We still have 80 interstate personnel working alongside our own crews across the state. We should be very proud of our women and men on the front line. The QFES response continues, with 25 appliances on scene today and three aircraft tasked if needed. I was also advised this morning that Canungra had 10 millimetres of rain land on the fire ground yesterday afternoon. QFES is assessing that this morning. Early indications are that it has not put the Sarabah fire out but it has brought QFES some much needed time. Yesterday the south-east corner endured 25,000 lightning strikes, with 2½ thousand of those striking the ground. Whilst we now have a reprieve from Mother Nature, we must still be prepared for a change in the fire weather. We have seen acts of bravery that have at times been hard to put into words: people putting their own lives at risk to save others. It is true that in the hands of our emergency staff Queenslanders should feel assured that they are looked out for.

QFES recognises that climate change is real and Labor recognises that we need new equipment to fight natural disasters with more planes, more boots on the ground, more trucks, more stations and more investment. The Palaszczuk government remains committed to supporting the work of our emergency services right now and into the future. We have put continued record investments into fire stations, equipment and staff. Since 2015, this government has brought on board more than 330 new firefighters. When the LNP was in office there was no fleet management plan: no plan on how to maintain the fleet, no plan to replace the fleet.

Since 2015, the Palaszczuk government has boosted the fleet to 365 new appliances: 222 trucks for the Rural Fire Service, 143 trucks for Fire and Rescue. This year alone we will deliver \$50 million for 34 Fire and Rescue appliances, 25 Rural Fire Service appliances, three replacement aerial ladder platforms and seven combined aerial pumping appliances. Our capital works program is also on track to further support the work of our fireys. Since the Palaszczuk government came into office we have spent—are you ready for it—\$156.8 million on stations and complexes across this state. The Palaszczuk government has supported our wonderful emergency services people since 2015. We will continue to back our emergency services volunteers and staff into the future.