




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 13 February 2019

MOTION

Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Inquiry

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (5.14 pm): I rise to oppose the motion presented by the member for Gregory. I would like to start by paying tribute to all of our great firefighters in this state, particularly those firefighters who fought the fires in my region, our volunteer rural firefighters, our police, the many, many volunteering groups like the SES and Red Cross, water truck drivers who were on the scene and local regional council and their staff. These people worked day and night to help protect Queensland lives and their property. I was proud to be part of a team that was on the ground at the time delivering information to local people to get them out of harm's way.

Together with the mayor of Gladstone I saw firsthand the challenges that many people were faced with during the recent fires in the Gladstone region. I was on the front line with Superintendent Paul Smeath and the mayor of Gladstone seeing what our firefighters and volunteers were seeing on the ground. It was tough seeing the work that was being done by those volunteers, particularly the hard task that the police had trying to remove people from their properties because they thought that they could fight the fire with the gear that they had.

It is good that the Inspector-General Emergency Management is conducting a review in relation to this fire. I note that the member for Callide on his Facebook page has called for people to put in their submissions. He also commented that there was a Queensland state review that has a longer time for submissions. It is great to see that the opposition is certainly engaging in the process to understand what happened during this fire and the processes that took place.

I note that point (h) of the motion is about communication and the practices that were undertaken. I can tell the member for Gregory that the community hall meetings, which were held pre, during and after and at which the member for Burnett was present, were certainly of the highest quality. There is no need for point (h) because the processes that QFES and the local councils put in place certainly were of the highest quality in relation to communication.

During the fires the Premier visited the region to make sure that everything possible was being delivered to put out the fires and save lives. It was after one of the meetings that she attended that we had extra personnel from New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. Without her support I do not think that would have happened.

During the bushfire, Queensland Fire and Emergency Service deployed over 3,000 people throughout the state who were assisted by 1,200 interstate staff and 59 aircraft. It was an absolute pleasure and honour to meet the volunteers as they came through Gladstone airport and thank them for taking time out of their lives to give us a hand when we sorely needed it. This government has every confidence in QFES Commissioner Katarina Carroll and her department to keep Queenslanders safe. This confidence was shown to be well placed when Queensland faced unprecedented bushfire conditions in November and December last year.

Bushfire management continues to evolve in line with scientific and technological advances. With the shared objective of best practice, the Palaszczuk government and the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service is committed to continuous improvement in this field. During this tragic event QFES provided excellent information to the community before and during the events in Agnes Water, Mount Larcom and Miriam Vale. I take this opportunity to personally thank officers Paul Smeath and Craig Majic for their continued service in tough times.

During the events of the November and December fires, QFES issued more than 570 community bushfire warnings to those affected. QFES is continuously conducting research into better ways of informing Queenslanders during such events. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has demonstrated significant progress in addressing issues covered in the QOA report. It is not true that they are not doing anything about it, as has been said.