



Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.23 pm): The Minister for Fire and Emergency Services stated that he was disappointed in our statement of reservation. The job of a shadow minister in opposition—any opposition in any part of this country—is to keep the minister accountable. My concerns about the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services are about the minister not about the staff. I have complete admiration for all who are involved in the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. They do an absolutely wonderful job. As the son of a rural firefighter who has just resigned from his position with the Rural Fire Service in the Emerald district I think they do a fantastic job.

Once again the estimates process proved to be a disappointing situation, burying scrutiny rather than allowing the accountability of government that Queenslanders deserve. A key frustration from the opposition was the fact that the inspector-general was not present at the estimates hearing to explain and articulate certain concerning actions he undertook in relation to the bushfire report. The acting inspector-general was unable to provide any rationale behind why on the day of the report's release the inspector-general wrote to the minister to clarify a recommendation to the report requiring changes to the vegetation management laws.

We know in this House that the government is vehemently against changing the vegetation management laws. The refusal to engage and discuss the effectiveness of the management of state controlled land and its fire mitigation continues to be a key source of frustration for the LNP. Excuses continued for Labor's failure to implement any of the recommendations from the 2014 Queensland Audit Office report *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness: Report 5: 2018-19*. The report which assessed the department's response to preparedness was accepted by the government in 2015. When the Labor government came into power it accepted the report but five years later there has not been a single recommendation actioned.

Issues around the where and why of the brewery tax were not answered, rather there was further confusion in relation to who was responsible. There was conflicting advice on the responsibility regarding industry engagement, about the levy increase and what support would now be offered to assist craft breweries staring down the barrel of a tenfold increase in levy fees—\$520 to \$5,200—which is a big increase. It was confirmed that no modelling was completed by either the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning or Queensland Fire and Emergency Services into the impact of the levy increase. There was no proof that any fires in breweries had taken place to justify the new category associated with the levy increase.

The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning seemed to be under the opinion that it was Queensland Fire and Emergency Services that was managing the impact of the levy increase on a case-by-case basis and providing support, but the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services confirmed there was no avenue to provide assistance through the emergency management levy structure. To make things worse, there was no cabinet consideration and changes had been introduced without consultation on these regulations.

Issues on the management and increased preparedness required for combustible cladding on Queensland buildings were also raised. The Labor government remains tight-lipped on which buildings are noncompliant and how many people live and work in them. This is lacking transparency. This side of the House believes people deserve to know if they are in a potentially dangerous and combustible building.

It appears the issues with the much maligned Nexus HR software continue. Training certificates are still not able to be printed and general issues with the software continue to plague the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' ability to properly and effectively manage its employees and volunteers.

The issue of faulty and incorrect Rural Fire provided maps to local brigades was raised and promptly batted off by the department in a classic 'not our department' moment. The refusal to take ownership of the incorrect maps and commit to providing new maps to brigades was astounding and concerning.

The decline in the SES was an issue not properly addressed by the minister. Between 2015-16 and 2018-19 there were 1,000 fewer volunteers across the state and there have been 19 SES groups closed right across Queensland. We need to make sure we have our volunteer groups ready and we need to be prepared to support them when we need them.