



Speech By  
**Hon. Leeanne Enoch**


**MEMBER FOR ALGESTER**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

**MOTION**

**Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, Parliamentary Inquiry**

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (5.54 pm): I rise to speak against the motion. The combination of severe prolonged drought and persistent hot, dry and windy conditions have shaped a bushfire season unlike anything any of us have ever seen before. The 2018 bushfires stand out in our state's recent history as the first time in Queensland the 'catastrophic' fire danger category was triggered. We saw rainforests burn for the first time, and this year we have experienced severe fire conditions earlier in the fire season than we have ever seen before. Records have been broken, traditional owners are telling us there are no stories to compare to what we are seeing now, and experts in fire management are telling us that this is the new normal. All of this points to the fact that the impacts of climate change cannot be ignored, but in the Leader of the Opposition's long motion there is not a single reference to a changing climate.

We know that the LNP members like to bury their heads in the sand when it comes to this issue—just ask the member for Callide—and we know they have no plans for tackling it. Instead, as we have heard today, they would rather attack the hardworking men and women who risk their lives protect the community. It is a sad day for this parliament when the LNP opposition would rather criticise fireys and park rangers than acknowledge the impacts of a changing climate. In my portfolio, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service firefighting crews have been deployed across the state, and many departmental staff have been helping behind the scenes in coordination centres, incident management teams and the state operations centre. Those men and women work hard to protect our communities, and they deserve nothing less than our full support and respect.

What is ironic about this motion is that it was the former LNP government that recklessly slashed \$10 million from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's salaries budget, which meant there were 60 fewer rangers to look after protected areas and respond to bushfires under their watch, yet the LNP members come in here and attack rangers and dedicated firefighters. It is a disgrace! Since the start of this year's bushfire season, officers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have been engaged around the clock working with emergency services to keep communities safe. The Department of Environment and Science has more than 500 staff trained as fire crew, and our government is investing \$13 million for fire management this financial year. In contrast, in 2014-15 the LNP government spent just \$8.5 million on fire management. In addition, in this year's budget we have allocated an extra \$16 million over four years and \$2.6 million in ongoing funding to provide improved capability for bushfire management in Queensland's parks and state forests.

Since January, QPWS staff and rangers have conducted over 290 planned burns covering more than 1.4 million hectares. This is the largest area covered in the last six years and is more than double the target—something the member for Callide might like to pay attention to. Since the Palaszczuk government was elected QPWS rangers consistently met their targets for planned burns, and in the last

two years they have exceeded those targets. It is increasingly apparent that Queensland will face more severe bushfire conditions as we experience a changing climate. The IGEM review report acknowledged that in this era of climate change such large-scale bushfire events are likely to become more common as bushfire seasons become more prolonged. I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to read this report. Our protected areas will not be immune from these fires.

I know that the LNP members like to throw mud, but I would like to state for the record that I am extremely proud of the efforts of rangers, emergency services and members of the community during these unprecedented events. In particular, I would like to praise the mammoth effort of QPWS rangers who, on top of fighting unprecedented fires, have also conducted more than double the targeted planned burns this year. I would again like to encourage the Leader of the Opposition to read the full report, which praises the work of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly their good neighbour policy, as a 'good example of a collaborative approach to cross-boundary management'.

Unlike those opposite, we are stepping up to tackle complex issues like a changing climate. It is a sad reflection on the Leader of the Opposition and the LNP that they would rather play politics than acknowledge this issue and attack the vital work our public servants do to protect the community and our unique environment. The government will oppose this motion.