




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 17 September 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires, Agriculture Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.02 am): Once again we have seen the devastating impact that bushfires can have. Communities in southern Queensland have faced some very difficult days over the last couple of weeks and, like many, I stand in awe of the magnificent job our emergency services and volunteer services have done in response. There can be little doubt that their actions have saved lives and I join those who have thanked them for their selfless service and professionalism.

Of course after the fire comes the recovery, and we know that fire events like these can have an immediate and deep impact on primary producers. More than 55,000 hectares of land has been burned, and that includes farming properties in the Scenic Rim and Southern Downs. That is why we have joined the federal government in making category B disaster assistance available to primary producers in those areas. Many of these producers are already impacted by the cruelty of drought in a changing climate, only now to have their farming assets damaged by fire. Like we have with Queensland communities stricken by drought, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with these primary producers to help them get back on their feet.

Under category B assistance arrangements, primary producers directly affected by the fires will be able to access concessional loans of up to \$250,000 while those who have suffered losses of income because of the fires but without suffering direct damage will have access to loans of up to \$100,000. Freight subsidies of up to \$5,000 will also be available to assist primary producers with recovery.

We know that sometimes disasters like this can have seemingly random impacts, with one property devastated while others around it are unaffected. Primary producers who are outside the category B declared areas but who have been impacted by bushfires can apply for an individual disaster stricken property declaration to access the same assistance as long as their circumstances meet the appropriate eligibility criteria. There has never been a more important time to stand beside our farmers, and once again the Palaszczuk government is doing exactly that.