




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires, Police Service Task Force

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (9.55 am): The Queensland Police Service has played a vital role in the response to the devastating bushfires that have recently affected so much of our state. Disturbingly, evidence has emerged that a number of fires have been deliberately lit. I can tell members that those who commit these reckless, dangerous, potentially deadly and, frankly, mind-numbingly stupid acts will feel the full force of the law.

Taskforce Overcross has been established by the Queensland Police Service with detectives from the State Crime Command. The task force's mission is to coordinate all investigations into suspicious fires around the state. Sadly, the statistics are confronting. There is current oversight of 60 fire investigations statewide. Some 34 of these investigations have been finalised. Of those, 23 are now subject to police action. As of eight o'clock this morning, 30 people have been dealt with for offences relating to deliberately setting these fires. We may not understand the motivations of these individuals who willingly put property and lives at risk, but we do know this: they will pay a price. The Queensland Police Service will make sure of that. Arson is a crime and a person who commits this crime could be liable to up to life imprisonment.

Eight senior officers are coordinating the task force, which comprises an additional 35 investigators. Investigations are still continuing into the fires which impacted the Sarabah, Canungra and Binna Burra areas. We must not forget to acknowledge that there has also been a much broader police response to these recent bushfires. Police have literally been on the front line, going to places at most risk from the fires and ensuring people in those danger zones get timely information, especially if there is a need to evacuate. There was one occasion last week where more than a dozen police officers almost spent the night with residents in the Gold Coast hinterland at O'Reilly's guesthouse. Residents, staff and police were forced to stay there because the fire had cut access to the road, and that is what our police do. This is another example of their hard work. In times of emergency, they stick with those who are vulnerable. Queenslanders can be assured that the police are ready to help and will ensure that anyone who breaks the law feels the full force of the law.