




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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ADJOURNMENT

Burrum Coast National Park, Fire

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.06 pm): On Sunday, 10 March a large fire was deliberately lit in the Kinkuna section of the Burrum Coast National Park in my electorate. I take this opportunity to highlight the serious impact on a farmer and grazier of an out-of-control fire. On Monday, 11 March the fire reached the farming property of Roger and Cynthia Draper when national park rangers attempted a major back-burn on their common boundary. The Drapers believe that the national parks team were under-resourced for this back-burn and, as a result, control of the fire was lost, the task was abandoned and all units left the site.

As a result, the Drapers lost 700 hectares of grazing pasture. They were forced to sell this year's calves two months early in a very flat market while they were still underweight, incurring a major financial loss. If they had been able to hold until the recent rains, they would not have had this problem. As it happened, the Drapers had to sell 143 calves at a loss of \$400 a head for the forced sale, a loss of \$70,000. If the pastures recover fast enough, the Drapers hope to maintain their breeding herd but they cannot graze cattle on burnt pastures for at least three months. With winter approaching, it may be longer. Roger and Cynthia have 22 kilometres of fencing affected by the fire. Some five kilometres of fence needs to be completely replaced, at a cost of around \$50,000. The other 17 kilometres of fences will need the wire replaced because the burnt wire will rust very quickly, and this will cost another \$30,000, including the cost of cleaning up the burnt-out and fallen trees. The Drapers also have a family business producing manuka honey from their wallum scrub. With all this burnt, the business will take two to three years to recover before the bees can return.

I highlight this disastrous situation for one family in the Burnett because I believe the fire and the damage it caused could have been far less or even prevented. This government's refusal to acknowledge the need for sensible, planned and regular cool burns in national parks has meant that the fire in Kinkuna became a raging inferno and swept across 6,000 hectares of national parks, decimating the environment for six long days. Worse, it destroyed the livelihood of a successful farmer whose property adjoins the Burrum Coast park. I doubt that the Minister for Environment will be willing to travel to Goodwood to meet the Drapers and to see the damage for herself, much less reconsider the need for planned back-burns in our protected area estate. For all who live near national parks, there is a powder keg on the doorstep of unmanaged vegetation just waiting to ignite. Unfortunately for Roger and Cynthia Draper, this government's payback to the Greens has destroyed their livelihood.

In conclusion, I again highlight the very important issues of cold burns and vegetation management reforms needed in our protected area estate. One thing we should look at in an urgent manner in this place is the involvement of Indigenous fire stick coal burning. Indigenous rangers around my part of the world are very keen to get involved. I would like to think that in future environment policies we give traditional owners the credit and use their well-known knowledge about what the protection of national parks should look like.