




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.59 am): Last time this House gathered we had thankfully seen the worst of Queensland's bushfire emergency. What a season it was! More than 3,000 fires burnt across more than 6 million hectares of our state. Fighting them was more than 10,000 of the most exceptional men and women you will ever meet: firefighters—QFES firefighters, interstate firefighters and overseas firefighters. Through their tireless efforts we saw no loss of life and countless properties saved. But just as our bushfire season wound down, conditions only intensified in the southern states. In true Queensland spirit, more than 900 QFES personnel put up their hand to help efforts in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. Despite their own exhaustion and months away from their loved ones, they signed up to do it all again. On 3 January a deployment of 76 QFES personnel arrived in Wollongong to relieve exhausted local crews. Since then, Queensland fireys can be found in places like Albury, Bega, Shoalhaven and Nowra. Not only were they fighting fires, they were the fire behaviour analysts, the incident management teams and the mechanics. The firefighting community is certainly not defined by state borders.

There are currently 239 QFES personnel and more than 30 vehicles deployed across New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. The majority of these resources are based around the nation's capital where a large containment strategy has been rolled out. We will continue to offer as much support as we can through the National Resource Sharing Centre. Our interstate colleagues were there for Queensland when we needed them and it is only right that the favour is returned.

Last week I had the privilege of speaking with local Rural Fire Service volunteers in both Peregian and Canungra. Between them these crews faced some of the worst bushfire conditions in Queensland history. Fireys are a special breed. They pulled off an incredible response to protect lives, homes, businesses and wildlife. The road to recovery is not a short one but we stand with our bushfire affected communities as we rebuild together.

Queensland is forever indebted to those who serve on the front line. Our government will continue to do what we have always done: invest in capabilities, listen to experts and learn from our last natural disaster to better prepare ourselves for the next. I am pleased to report that last Friday QFES officially called time on the 2019 bushfire season with the conclusion of Operation Redux. As North Queenslanders now know, and the rest of the state is seeing, storm season is already upon us and that is very much where QFES's focus has now shifted to. Please stay well prepared for severe storms and have an emergency plan ready to go and if it is flooded, forget it.