




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.54 pm): I also rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 5 of 2018-19 on the Queensland Audit Office report titled *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness*. This QAO audit is really a follow-up on an original audit that it had undertaken which was tabled in 2014 to see how we were going with bushfire preparedness, particularly in light of lessons learnt from the Victorian bushfire royal commission inquiry, the *Malone review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland* in 2013 and the police and community safety review of 2013.

The audit found that QFES needs to strengthen its role as the lead agency in mitigating bushfire risk in Queensland. When I look at the recommendations that stem from that original report, I note things such as there needs to be coordination of land managers' efforts to assess and mitigate bushfire risk; there needs to be formalisation of the role of fire management groups to manage Queensland's fuel loads, including reporting planned and conducted hazard reduction burns and the effectiveness of hazard reduction burns; and amending its bushfire mitigation planning to address prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to manage Queensland's residual bushfire risk. It goes on with other recommendations.

When I hear those things, I hear a warning voice in my ear saying, 'We've been here before.' When I go around as the member for Southern Downs there are a great number of my constituents who raise with me concerns about those very matters—the accumulation of bushfire fuel in crown lands, the difficulties of getting permits and the difficulties of managing their own properties when they are next to crown land, inevitably full of bushfire fuel and besieged with pigs, dogs, boxthorn and all sorts of things. In fact, I was induced by my constituents to run a parliamentary petition on this very matter last year and 700 of my fellow Southern Downs constituents agreed with me that more needed to be done by the state government, particularly in relation to its function as a neighbour. It is well known in the bush that the Queensland government is a poor neighbour to have in terms of fencing and cross-contamination of biohazards and bushfire fuel loads, so I am glad to see that we have revisited the report of 2014.

The difficulty I see is that there are two levels of understanding. There is the professional department that has the best of intentions and very good people, but there are also the firefighters and the community people on the ground. In my observations in many cases they are in fundamental disagreement about how some bushfires ought to be managed and how we ought to prepare for them. I would just caution the House that just because a lot of work has been done to mitigate bushfire risks it is always necessary to reflect to those on the ground—those who have fought bushfires for, in many cases, many years or generations who know their patch and understand how the fires behave and have a corporate memory of how bushfire fuel loads and so forth were in years gone by. I think that there is some of that missing.

I do hear angry complaints from constituents that their voices appear not to be heard in these matters. As a member of the Severnlea West Rural Fire Brigade, the guys in that brigade who go out and fight the fires tell me that they feel that more can be done. I commend the report to the House. I think it is good to be vigilant and to have constant oversight of these matters. I note that more can be done, and in particular I would highlight to the House the 10-point plan, which I completely support, by the LNP for bushfire risk management.