




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts) (3.04 pm): I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 49 regarding the examination of the Queensland Audit Office report No. 5 for 2018-19, *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness*. Fire management is a high priority for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and bushfire safety is a primary consideration for the Department of Environment and Science, particularly where urban and rural communities adjoin parks and forests. In preparation for the 2019 fire season, QPWS treated more than one million hectares of protected area estate through planned burns, nearly double the annual target of 634,800 hectares.

Right now the department's focus is on mitigating bushfire risk ahead of the 2020 bushfire season through Operation Cool Burn alongside the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, other government bodies, First Nation peoples and landholders. This year the planned burn program commenced in the north of the state in January and gradually expanded as favourable weather conditions allowed. By the end of April this year, QPWS had conducted more than 130 planned burns across Queensland, and it is still going. I am pleased to advise the House that this is more than double the burns undertaken for the same period last year. This means despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 QPWS has once again exceeded its planned burn targets. During its entire time in office, the LNP did not even come close to numbers like this and it will take more than a cheap 10-point brochure to convince Queenslanders that it is truly committed to the long-term conservation of the state's natural and cultural values.

In recent years QPWS has been involved in the 2018 and 2019 bushfire reviews undertaken by the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management. The 2019 review acknowledged the effectiveness of the QPWS planned burn program in keeping Queensland communities safe. The 2019 review also made mention of the valued contribution QPWS officers made in the emergency response centres during the 2019 bushfire season through their expert local knowledge. The IGEM report into the 2018 bushfires acknowledges the effectiveness of QPWS's good neighbour policy. QPWS continues to grow its partnerships with other landholders as it embeds traditional knowledge into fire management practices. First Nation people and their knowledge are increasingly at the forefront of joint efforts to provide landscape-wide fire management skills and services to Queensland. First Nation ecological knowledge and practices continue to be critical to the management of country in Queensland, as it has been for thousands of generations.

The Department of Environment and Science is working in partnership with over 30 First Nation groups to conduct planned burns based on this knowledge. Work is underway to identify further locations where traditional burning programs could be implemented in both protected areas and of course on country. First Nation peoples have an equal say about how to manage over 2.1 million hectares of national park. Far from a trial, as it is proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, this is

happening now. These partnerships and the capacity of QPWS to manage fire risks are being further strengthened by the Palaszczuk government's additional \$16 million investment over four years commencing in 2019-20 and \$2.6 million per year ongoing.

This funding is focused on taking practical steps to reduce the risk of bushfire to the neighbouring communities of our protected areas and supporting enhanced collaboration with all partners to encourage a landscape-scale approach to fire management. This funding has already delivered the department's first dedicated fire management team of six new rangers in South-East Queensland and is boosting the department's firefighting fleet capacity by 33 fire attack units. I want to acknowledge all of the hard work that rangers have undertaken to prepare for the forthcoming bushfire season and their ongoing commitment to keeping Queenslanders safe. As we have seen in recent years, preparation for fire season is critically important for the safety of Queensland families. The work that our rangers do right across Queensland should be acknowledged and of course celebrated. They do an incredible job. I also want to thank the committee for its hard work in examining the Queensland Audit Office report.