




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 4 December 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fraser Island, Bushfire

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.43 am): Seventeen firefighting aircraft, including the large air tanker, were used by firefighters on Fraser Island yesterday. Nearly three million litres of water and retardant gel have been dropped on the fire, and the priority right now is protecting people's lives and property. No lives have been lost and no property has been destroyed.

The deployment of firefighting resources, including the large air tanker, is a matter for the experts, our firefighters. I trust them to make the right decisions, just like this government trusted Dr Jeannette Young, our Chief Health Officer, to make the right decisions. However, as with any emergency incidents, there will be an independent review conducted by the Inspector-General Emergency Management, or IGEM, to determine whether anything could be done better in the future. In fact, Queensland's IGEM model was singled out by the royal commission into bushfires as an exemplar of independent evaluation and investigation. This is what the royal commission, Scott Morrison's royal commission, said—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Kawana will cease his interjections.

Mr RYAN: The report stated—

Queensland and Victoria's IGEM arrangements perform valuable assurance, evaluation and continuous improvement functions—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The Treasurer will cease his interjections.

Mr RYAN: It continues—

for their state fire and emergency services. Other jurisdictions should establish similar arrangements.

We will have an independent review by the Inspector-General Emergency Management and any lessons that can be learned will be acted upon. Again, the priority now is protecting lives and property. As I speak, there are nearly 100 specialists, including professional firefighters, on the ground fighting this fire and they are being supported by firefighting aircraft including five fixed-wing bombers, two Helitak bombers, two air attack platforms, one air observation platform, one large air tanker and one LAT lead plane. The large air tanker is contracted to be in Queensland for the bushfire season. If there is a need to keep—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my left, I do not believe that the minister is saying anything that could be considered provocative. I ask you to cease your interjections. I would like to hear the ministerial statement.

Mr RYAN: If there is a need to keep the large air tanker in Queensland longer, the contract can be extended. In fact, that has already happened. If needed, the contract can be further extended. In addition, if operationally required, there are other firefighting aircraft available around Australia for use in Queensland, including a large air tanker based in New South Wales, just as the Queensland large air tanker is available for use elsewhere in the country when required. This further emphasises the need for the federal government to implement one of the key recommendations of the royal commission, and that is to establish a national aerial firefighting fleet. It is on the Prime Minister to implement the recommendation of the royal commission into the bushfires to support communities right around Australia.