




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Audit Office report No. 5 of 2018-19 titled *Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness*. Queensland saw an unprecedented number of fires in 2019. While unfavourable weather conditions paired with ongoing drought did not help, neither did the lack of hazard burns and bushfire mitigation works.

I met with residents from Hampton in the electorate of Condamine late last year who were extremely worried. They advised me that a controlled burn in the Hampton National Park, which is not far from their homes, had not been conducted for a number of years. Luckily for them, the fires did not reach their doorstep. However, as we know, they are not out of the woods just yet. I ask the minister, as I did this time last year: what is the bushfire mitigation plan for the Ravensbourne, Pechey and Hampton areas? Why are Queenslanders put in this position when the facts were laid out on the table six years ago?

In 2014 the Queensland Audit Office tabled its report No. 10 of 2014-15 in the Queensland parliament titled *Bushfire prevention and preparedness*. The report examined whether Queensland was better able to prevent and prepare for bushfires following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland in 2013 and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013. The Queensland Audit Office concluded that Queensland was not as prepared for the threat of bushfires as it could be and also finding Queensland Fire and Emergency Services was response focused.

The Queensland Audit Office suggested that QFES put a major emphasis on their mitigation works, making sure they had done as much as possible to decrease the severity of potential fires if they were to break out. The report made a number of recommendations. In March 2018 the Queensland Audit Office set out to establish whether QFES had effectively implemented these recommendations. The Queensland Audit Office found that QFES had made some progress but had only partially implemented the recommendations. Despite these efforts, the Queensland Audit Office concluded that more work is still needed to ensure Queensland communities are not exposed to higher levels of risk than they need to be.

In the electorate of Condamine a fire started in the Pechey and Hampton areas near Ravensbourne on 12 November—exactly the area about which concerned locals had raised fears with me. It destroyed almost 20,000 hectares of land and several properties, vehicles and equipment. Some people in Crows Nest were forced to flee their homes as the fire came dangerously close to their township.

Lack of fire mitigation work in the area also meant vital power sources were cut. This was due to no easement being granted along the power corridor and thick regrowth growing unmanaged underneath the powerlines. These power cuts had a major impact on the water supply as power to the

pumps at Cressbrook and Perseverance dams was cut off, reducing residents to domestic water use only as Ergon and the council worked to repair the network damage with water supply for firefighters given priority.

Instead of implementing these recommendations, this Palaszczuk government chooses to blame coalmines, power stations and Scott Morrison for the massive bushfire that wreaked so much damage across the state. The LNP does have a plan. It has a 10-point plan and is ready to take real action to get Queensland bushfire ready. These are simple things that have been done in conjunction with our local firefighters. As the member for Scenic Rim said, we have people in the Rural Fire Brigade with up to 50 years experience and knowledge in fighting fires in different terrains in their own home country. Fires on plain lands are different to those in mountains, gullies and hills. Those people were largely ignored and they are extremely frustrated.

I would like to thank all those firefighters for the efforts they put in not only in Ravensbourne and Pechey but across the state. I would also like to acknowledge the effort by the SES and the Salvation Army, who provided 1,500 meals during the Ravensbourne fire for their volunteer firefighters. It was a sterling effort by the community. They need all the support this government can give them.