




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.13 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to speak to report No. 49 of the 56th Parliament titled *Examination of Queensland Audit Office report 5: 2018-19: Follow-up of bushfire prevention and preparedness*. Essentially, what this report from the Audit Office demonstrates is that the Queensland government has seen progress proceed at a snail's pace.

In March 2018, the QAO set out to establish whether QFES had effectively implemented the recommendations made by the QAO in the 2014 Auditor-General's report. The Queensland Audit Office found that QFES had made some progress, but has only partially implemented some recommendations. The Queensland Audit Office noted that: QFES has not fully rolled out its risk mitigation tools across all regions; more training and continuous improvement is needed to make sure they are effectively used to strengthen Queensland's approach to risk mitigation; and better engagement with local communities is also needed to understand their risk and help them prepare for bushfires.

Given we are now 12 months down the track from the bushfires that burnt out a significant part of my electorate and we have once again experienced several weeks of the entire state being declared a fire emergency, what has really happened since? The Palaszczuk government has consumed five more years rolling out administrative measures and training protocols and some high-technology tools, yet I am fielding questions from local brigades about when they are going to see tangible benefits to help them with an on-the-ground fire.

I have to agree that predictive tools for Operation Cool Burn might look good on a report, but what about delivering preventative burns or putting in place alternative measures like permanent firebreaks and preparing accesses. If it is too hot or the period of time is too short to cool burn then maybe we should put more people on the ground or adopt alternative methods from the forestry manual like thinning and clearing up excess amounts of understory and ground cover by mechanical means.

I am sure that there would be many small businesses, especially across regional Queensland, keen to be given the work. The task can start straight after the summer rain stops. Sadly, I suspect the real answer amounts to interference by very counterproductive, environmental protection and vegetation management policies that have been inflicted on government agencies and prevented local fire wardens from issuing timely burn-off permits to landowners and rural brigades during the winter months. Indeed, it might look glorious for the minister to be highlighting in his statement this morning that 3.9 billion hectares of national park have been burnt, presumably in a properly controlled manner, over the last five years. Queensland is vastly larger, encompassing 185 million hectares of land controlled by multiple state and local government jurisdictions as well as millions of private and corporate holdings.

Not all fires involve national parks, as evidenced by the recent Yeppoon and Sunshine Coast fires and bushfires. These fires were on landholdings close to urban centres, featuring town commons, future developments, nature reserves and, in many other instances, road, rail, energy and infrastructure corridors that are avenues for bushfires to be started and spread. Much should be said about the importance of fire prevention across every type of landholding.

It is now clearly evident the Queensland government under the Palaszczuk-Trad leadership has disconnected from the people and is openly pandering to the UN and the IPPC crowd. If there is no fuel load then we as a community need not bear the growing cost and disruption of rolling out thousands of rural volunteers and paying millions for aerial fire bombers for fires that often grow quickly to magnitudes more intense than they otherwise would have been.

I note that the Premier has now moved forward with record pace to commit a further \$18.1 million on a Queensland based large air tanker, which is remarkable given the extent of the unresolved priorities first identified in the Malone report and reconfirmed in multiple QAO and Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee reports since. How does the Palaszczuk government correlate the importance of putting all their cards on one single asset when so many other identified priorities are still seeking attention and funding? Might I suggest it is an absurd decision to be throwing cash on a 30-year-old C130 that at best can deliver 15,000 litres an hour on one or two fire fronts.

The sad reality is that the state government is about to see an even larger exodus of dedicated volunteer rural fire brigade members who are walking away due to a badly managed blue card rollout. This is on top of years of disenchantment with regard to how rural fire brigades get ignored as a volunteer appendage of QFES. Fair dinkum, where is the priority shown to bushfire preparedness when the Palaszczuk ALP government is now skipping out on the delivery of much needed tools for the thousands of frontline—

(Time expired)