




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Rockhampton Bureau of Meteorology Station

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.34 pm): Is this all the opposition has? To give five minutes of infatuation and obsession is very creepy behaviour from the member for Kawana. I think perhaps he should concentrate his obsession and fascination on the Royal Family rather than on the Treasurer in this place. I find it fascinating that the member is giving fashion advice, considering he wears a pocket square. I mean, seriously! It is time to concentrate on the issues, and that is exactly what I am here to do today.

The cuts to the Rockhampton Bureau of Meteorology station by the LNP Morrison government and the sacking of expert forecasters and technicians will have a devastating impact on regional weather, radar, warning and disaster services. Staff have been let go, the weather radar has been decommissioned, most of the equipment at the station has been removed and this vital service is in dire straits.

These shameful cuts affect not only the Rockhampton Bureau of Meteorology station but also the stations in Mackay, Cairns, Townsville, Charleville and Mount Isa. Central Queensland needs better meteorological advice based on expert local knowledge. We need technicians based locally for equipment maintenance and repairs. These cuts to our local BOM station will be devastating for the local community and our economy.

Peter Byrne is a local weather and television legend who worked at the Bureau of Meteorology for over 37 years. Peter wrote to me last week 'aghast at the looming closure of the Rocky BOM'. He said that 'the whole saga is unacceptable', that 'the public had been hoodwinked and a vital service is threatened'. He went on to say that the forecasts coming out of Brisbane now are 'mostly computer generated, are poor and frequently inaccurate'. He also went on to say—

The forecasts are well shy of the mark, contradictory, grammatically incorrect and seldom updated. Nothing short of a disgrace. I table a copy of Mr Byrne's letter for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 17 April 2021, from Mr Peter Byrne, to the Keppel electorate office, titled 'Rocky Bureau of Meteorology' [515](#).

Reliable local weather forecasting and observations are incredibly important for many aspects of our community. Boaties rely on weather reports before they head out on the water; so, too, does our Defence Force during military training at Shoalwater. The Gladstone port, Rockhampton Airport, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service all utilise weather forecasts and observations on a daily basis.

As a volunteer rural firefighter, I am concerned about the impacts of the BOM station closing on our hazard reduction burn planning and the safety of volunteer rural firefighters when we are fighting bushfires. The Cobraball bushfire in 2019 is a classic example. The fire was moving at incredible speeds in one direction and then, as quickly as the wind changed, the fire started moving in another direction.

QFES said that the aim during that fire was the preservation of life. We were lucky not to have any lives lost. That wind data was absolutely integral to the tactics employed on the ground and in the air. The aerial firefighters, the urban firefighters, the volunteer rural firefighters and the SES all had to work together to save lives in an event where the wind speed and direction was a critical determinant in how to fight that fire.

The Rockhampton BOM was established at the Rockhampton Airport in 1939 as an observation station to support the aviation industry and provide weather data to the region. Prior to 1939, rainfall data was collected at the Rockhampton post office. We need reliable data from devices based in our region and serviced by local technicians. The BOM in Rocky no longer has sonde data, which measures atmospheric pressure and a range of other important data. If one of our wind monitors or flood gauges needs repairing, a technician from Brisbane or Cairns has to fly in to fix it. Our wave buoy off Emu Park went down for several weeks before it was fixed, because someone had to fly in to fix it. It was the same with the Rundle Island wind monitor. Previously, a locally based technician would be responsible for repairing the equipment.

We know to expect more frequent and severe weather events into the future. Given that Central Queensland is one of the most disaster affected areas in the country, our community and economy rely on reliable local weather forecasts, observations and warnings. Since 2015, Keppel has experienced a category 5 cyclone, two major bushfires, a Q100 flood, a severe hailstorm and the worst drought on record. All of these events require a well-resourced bureau, backed with the local knowledge of local forecasters. It is absolutely imperative.

We need to build the BOM back better. We need more expert staff, more radars, more gauges, more monitors and more alerts. Automation of the bureau and control out of Brisbane is not good enough. The LNP says it is an 'efficiency measure', which is code for a cut. Our region deserves a fully resourced BOM station, not more cuts to staff and services. Now is the time for the member for Capricornia and all of those opposite to realise that this decision is downright insulting to Central Queenslanders and they should reverse these cuts immediately.

(Time expired)