



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 18 November 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Bushfires, Fire-fighting Capability

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.37 pm): The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements highlighted the need to be less reliant on foreign companies for bushfire fighting and the need to attack bushfires when they break out. Thankfully, Queensland is home to three outstanding companies that can assist and have a proven track record in meeting those needs.

First up there is Exci, which uses satellites and ground based cameras to identify bushfires. Real world experience shows Exci can identify 66 per cent of fires within one minute and all fires within a few minutes. Exci can pinpoint the exact location of a fire and provide real-time data direct to emergency services headquarters or directly to the fire controller at the fire front. Queensland firm HQPlantations already relies on Exci's technology, as does the forest service and the Rural Fire Service in New South Wales. Globally, Exci boasts partnerships with government and energy producers, and in March 2022 Exci plans to launch its first Australian satellite from Abbot Point in the Burdekin electorate.

When it comes to responding to bushfires, the importance of aircraft is second only to the brave men and women on the ground. Helitak Firefighting Equipment is one of only three companies in the world that supply underbelly expandable aerial fire suppression tanks which are fitted to helicopters. It is no wonder that Helitak's products are used throughout the country and across the globe, when a Black Hawk helicopter fitted with a Helitak tank can deliver an astounding 60,000 litres of property and lifesaving water to the fire front every hour and can refill its tanks in less than a minute without landing.

Helitak undoubtedly provides a system that, combined with fixed-wing aircraft like the Dash 8 large aerial tanker, would provide a massive boost when fighting bushfires. McDermott Aviation, based on the Sunshine Coast, are not only the largest employer of aviation apprentices in the country; they are also world renowned for their skills in bushfire fighting, proven by the fact that six of their helicopters were recently called on to help fight horrific fires in Greece. To have a company with a global reputation for bushfire fighting based here in Queensland is a tremendous addition to our ability to protect Queenslanders' lives and property.

Together, Exci, Helitak and McDermott Aviation can make Queensland safer. I call on the minister to embrace the abilities of these three companies because of their skills and their expertise. They are Queensland companies. They provide Queensland jobs. Their expertise and their firefighting ability are second to none. We should be supporting Queensland based companies such as Exci, Helitak and McDermott Aviation.