




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

ADJOURNMENT

Emergency Management Levy

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (7.17 pm): September marks two years since my local community came face to face with a potentially life-changing and devastating event when a bushfire broke out in the national park adjacent to a major residential estate. That this bushfire, which destroyed hundreds of hectares of native vegetation, did not cause more damage or result in more severe consequences is nothing short of a miracle.

On that fateful evening of 9 September 2019, it was the swift and rapid response of our fire and emergency services personnel that saved dozens of homes and hundreds of lives in and around Peregian. At the fire's peak, more than 100 crews were on the ground battling to protect homes and livelihoods as the fire threatened. Understandably, the outpouring of community gratitude for the actions of the first responders in the aftermath of this near tragedy was significant. Locals rallied together and raised thousands of dollars to support the efforts of the volunteer fire and emergency services who stood shoulder to shoulder with their paid colleagues on the front line.

With this event firmly etched in the minds of locals, it was a bitter blow to find out recently that the state government intends to hit residents and businesses with a massive increase to the fire levy in a month's time. Dozens of residents and business owners have contacted my office after receiving advice that the emergency management levy, which is collected on behalf of the state government via council rates, would increase by 112 per cent on 1 July due to a decision to reclassify the local area's zoning from class D to class A.

There was no consultation, no warning and no explanation as to what services will be improved, just a one-page letter outlining the increase was due to five permanent staff now being stationed at Coolum. Of course our community and I are grateful for the services of the local Coolum fire and emergency services, but how this extra service equates to such a massive hike in fees has left locals reeling and struggling to comprehend.

As we all navigate our way through the post-COVID economy, the last thing business and home owners need is another sneaky tax grab by the debt ridden, lazy Labor government. This is not the time to target businesses that are driving the economic recovery and providing much needed jobs for locals. This is not the time to target home owners, when housing affordability and homelessness in this state have reached crisis point. Surely it would be smarter to first consult with the community and work towards to an incremental increase.

On behalf of the hundreds of home owners and businesses in the Coolum and Peregian Springs area, I strongly urge the state government to show some common sense and compassion and support an urgent review of this decision.