




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Natural Disasters, Technology

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.36 pm): Today marks the first day of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System, a recommendation of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Queenslanders are not immune to bushfires or other natural disasters, and whilst we have now addressed our sovereign aerial firefighting capability, another of the recommendations of that royal commission, we cannot rest on our laurels.

Two roles of any government are to protect people from danger and to support Queensland businesses. Just yesterday Queensland company, Helitak, launched a new product that has the potential to protect Queenslanders from natural disasters and to help in the recovery effort. Today I am calling on this government to give due consideration to Helitak's capabilities when equipping Queenslanders for the next disaster they may face. While the previous version of Helitak's unique expandable underbelly tanks, fitted to Black Hawk helicopters in South Australia and Western Australia, were described as a 'capability boost for our hero firefighters', Helitak have not rested on their laurels. The unique sound of the tandem-rotor Chinook helicopter, or CH-47 as it is officially known, is familiar to many Queenslanders. In addition to their use on military operations, Chinooks are well-known in the north for their role in responding to disasters, including Cyclone Yasi. Their top speed of over 300km/h and huge payload enabled the fast transport of personnel and supplies when they were needed most.

Just yesterday, Helitak announced an upgrade in their life-saving offering and a new mission for the Chinook—firefighting. This turn-key firefighting platform will be equipped to carry over 11,000 litres of fire suppressant that can be refilled in under 60 seconds from rivers, creeks, dams or even swimming pools. That means less time on the ground refilling and more time fighting fires.

However, this amazing piece of machinery is not a one-trick pony. Helitak's underbelly tank can be installed on, or removed from, the Chinook in under 25 minutes. That means the Chinook can easily be refigured to carry up to 44 emergency responders, be used to transport equipment, or used for medevac purposes. Due to this flexibility, the Chinook platform can be used in the response to cyclones, flooding or a myriad of natural disasters.

Two things are undoubtable: firstly, Queenslanders will again stare down bushfires and other natural disasters, and Queensland should be incredibly proud to call Helitak one of their own. I want to pay tribute to Helitak's operations manager, Paul Blundell, for the work he has done and the amount of time and effort that that company has put into bringing this technology to Queensland, technology that we should be embracing.