



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Ryan**


**MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD**

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Public Safety Mobile Broadband**

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (10.29 am): Mr Speaker, picture this: it is dusk on the second day of efforts to control a major bushfire. Over 300 firefighters and Rural Fire Service volunteers have been deployed to battle the fire. The response includes six water-bombing aircraft and dozens of vehicles. The response is monitored from above. A fleet of drones maintain watch over the fire front. The drones communicate with each other. When one leaves to refuel, another one automatically takes its place. Deployable base stations provide the drones with a data network to stream their data to a nearby command centre.

To make this scenario real requires public safety mobile broadband capability. The platform to do that already happens to exist, and for some considerable time jurisdictions right across Australia have been working cooperatively to achieve this goal. It is a matter of national importance; it is a matter of public safety. The recent flooding events that unfolded across Queensland and New South Wales emphasise the desirability of having advanced communication capabilities for public safety agencies like police, firefighters and paramedics.

It is with great disappointment I inform the House that the federal government has not acted in the national interest. Despite protests from the states, the federal government has sold the preferred spectrum for public safety mobile broadband to a private entity rather than preserve this spectrum for public safety agencies. The federal government should have ensured that the preferred valuable broadband spectrum required for public safety mobile broadband was made available to the nation's public safety agencies, but the federal government did not do this. It sold the preferred spectrum to a private entity for—and this is the scandal—significantly less than what it offered to sell it to the states for.

It beggars belief that the federal government, knowing how critical this preferred spectrum is for public safety, would not offer the same arrangement to the states as it offered to a private entity. Despite representations from the states, including most recently from the Liberal New South Wales government, the federal government's actions mean that the best and most cost-effective communications capability is now no longer an option for public safety agencies and public safety in communities.

I have written to every emergency services minister across the nation to have this significant issue of national importance put on the agenda for the next meeting of the nation's emergency management ministers. To be frank, the federal government has let down Queenslanders and Australians. In fact, the federal government's actions also conflict with a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements—also known as the bushfires royal commission—which states, 'The federal, state and territory governments should expedite the delivery of public safety mobile broadband capability.' Instead, despite strong protests from the states, the federal government has sold out the Australian people by selling a critical public safety asset for a relative pittance. The

federal government has preferred the privatisation of this essential public safety asset over the public safety needs of Australians. The actions of the federal government are scandalous, they are outrageous, and they should be held to account.