




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Nash, Ms I

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.25 pm): On 2 May, Izabella 'Izzy' Nash lost her life following a factory fire at Slacks Creek. Her colleague, Lia Drew, was also seriously injured in this fire. I want to pass on my condolences to Izzy's partner and family on behalf of the opposition and wish Lia well in her recovery. This is the most serious tragedy to strike the fire service since Gold Coast firefighters Noel Watson and Herbie Fennell were killed battling a blaze in 1994.

On Monday this week, the leader and I attended a memorial service for Izzy, a service attended by firefighters from across Queensland and Australia, including commissioners from across the country, except the Commissioner of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Mr Greg Leach. There is no more critical incident within emergency services than the loss of a life, and our firefighters across Queensland were rocked at the news that Izzy Nash had lost her life in the line of duty. This is a time when leadership is critical. This is a time when employees look to their leadership team for support, guidance and hope. It was with disbelief that we found out this week that QFES Commissioner Greg Leach did not attend the memorial service for Izzy Nash, and his absence has sent shock waves through the service.

Where was Mr Leach? We now know that he was on leave and out of the country. Yes, we are all entitled to time off, but when you are the commissioner, when you are the leader of an emergency services organisation in this state, you have an obligation to your staff, and firefighters across Queensland have a right to ask why, following the death of Izzy Nash and serious injuries to her colleague Lia Drew, did he not immediately return to Queensland to offer support and guidance to his firefighters in their time of need. It defies belief that some three weeks after Izzy's death, the commissioner could not find it within himself to attend her memorial service this week.

Our firefighters have a right to be angry. They have a right to demand answers, and the minister owes each and every one of them an explanation as to his role in this debacle and the fact that the QFES commissioner has been MIA when this state needed him most. This minister needs to explain why he agreed to the granting of this leave, why he did not drag the commissioner back to Queensland upon becoming aware of Izzy Nash's death, and why he continues to run for the hills whenever the tough questions need to be answered. As a Queensland firefighter said, 'We as a family rely on our leaders to offer a face to our organisation, to demonstrate the support we have for each other and to shield us from the white noise that comes with this sort of event.' This is about leadership and the minister has failed QFES and he has failed Queensland.

Mr RYAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at what the member has said and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw.