




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Bushfire Preparedness

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.18 pm): 'The management seems to come from Brisbane and anybody up here seems to have to do what they tell them ... and it's mostly wrong!' Those are the words of Bloomsbury Rural Fire Brigade president Gary Condison back in 2018 when referring to the risk of bushfires in national parks spreading into grazing lands. After what we have heard in the last two weeks, one would be forgiven for thinking that Mr Condison was referring to this current government.

Just yesterday, both the Premier and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services stood in this House and spoke about the dangers posed by the upcoming bushfire season. Of course the minister talked about investing in Rural Fire Service vehicles and said he wanted people on the front line to have the best and safest vehicles and equipment possible.

Make no mistake: bushfires pose a major threat to communities, to businesses and to grazing land throughout this state and the threat posed increases due to the inaction and the failings of this government. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Greg Leach is quoted in the media as saying that it is now too late for residents to start hazard reduction burns and I have no reason to disagree with the commissioner. However, the question that the minister needs to answer is this: why has it all been left so late? Communities across this state, where volunteers were in the late stages of planning hazard reduction burns, have been told 'no' at the last moment. Those volunteers, whom Queenslanders trust, say there was no advanced warnings provided and that now the risks they face while defending their communities have increased significantly. Those risks were already high enough because of the inaction of this minister.

Under this minister, the number of Rural Fire Service volunteers has reduced. Under this minister, we have seen the delivery of Rural Fire Service vehicles and appliances delayed and, as we learnt earlier this week, vehicles that the Rural Fire Service does have are being taken off the road due to safety concerns. However, it does not stop there. In estimates it was confirmed that lifesaving equipment was not fitted to vehicles delivered to volunteers. Almost five years after Mr Condison spoke publicly about this government's failure to reduce the fire hazard in national parks and, therefore, increase the safety of businesses and communities nearby, nothing has changed. The danger posed by bushfires is real and we all have a role to play in reducing the horrific effects of those fires.

Sadly for all of Queensland, the government has failed to fulfil its obligations under this minister and, as a direct result, the threat posed has unquestionably increased. Heaven forbid, over the coming weeks and months as that fire risk increases, fires should get out of control in this state. We cannot afford it. The horse has bolted and now, unfortunately, we may see the consequences.