




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Bushfire Preparedness

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.56 pm): Prepare, do not procrastinate. That is the warning from the Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, a warning that is supposedly shared by state governments. It is a fear that should be shared because, according to AFAC, an increased risk of bushfire has been identified for large areas of Queensland—and don't we know that?—as I speak. In response to terrorism and even the pandemic we were told to be alert, not alarmed. Anyone who has stared down a natural disaster knows the value of warnings. The value of those warnings is also recognised by the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements and in this government's 2019 Queensland Bushfires Review.

The value of warnings is well recognised by all except the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. Across Queensland, fire danger signs alert locals and visitors to the threat of bushfire. Correction: they did. In the face of what is expected to be a catastrophic fire season, this government has ripped down 300 fire warning signs across Queensland and replaced them with just 64 electronic signs. When asked why, it was reported that planning, consultation and risk assessments were required—work that should have been underway for over a year now.

While the risk assessment for this bushfire season shows increased risk, Queenslanders are being denied life-saving warnings due to the inaction and incompetence of the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. While the sharing of warnings via the media and social media is important, what must be remembered is that many areas of Queensland suffer from inadequate or non-existent telecommunications. Even Labor acknowledges this, given that its state policy platform commits Labor to improving access to digital capability for Queenslanders, particularly those in regional and remote communities. When facing the threat of bushfires, Queenslanders in regional and remote areas should not be left uninformed. For any government, the highest priority should be ensuring the safety of Queenslanders, but that is clearly not the case when it comes to this mob.

The threat that Queenslanders face from bushfires is being amplified by the inaction of the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. We know that under this minister rural fire brigades have taken their vehicles off the road because they are noncompliant. We know that under this minister life-saving equipment was not provided to Rural Fire Service volunteers, and now we know that this minister has allowed critical warning signs to be removed. Queensland and Queenslanders face a real threat this fire season. While Queenslanders still will stand shoulder to shoulder and act to defend their communities, they know that this minister has failed to act in their time of need. It is our Rural Fire Service and our QFES workers who will bear the brunt of this.