




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 16 November 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Bushfires

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.27 pm): From Mission River in the north all the way to the border, paid and volunteer firefighters are currently responding to more than 40 vegetation fires, and six warnings are in force. Sadly, we have recently seen lives lost in Tara and near McKinlay. I want to put on the record my condolences and the condolences of all members on this side of the House to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives.

I also want to put on the record from both myself and my colleagues our thanks and admiration for the paid and volunteer firefighters, associated staff and landholders who have battled and are continuing to battle those fires. Since we last met in this place, we have seen some of the worst bushfires in Queensland in the last 40 years. Some of those fires continue to burn today and predictions are that there are more to come. We have seen infrastructure, homes and other structures destroyed. Today we have Queenslanders who were made homeless earlier this year who are relying on family and friends and support services and agencies.

As that recovery continues, and as the response to current fires continues, there are more and more reports of challenges being put in the way of preparedness. It is almost impossible, for example, to burn off along main roads, despite the fact that we see roadsides covered in heavy fuel loads of vegetation. That continues to pose a significant risk in some areas of our state.

We have firebreaks that locals describe as insufficient, and that is if they get permission to put breaks in. As the Premier saw in Tara, firebreaks save homes, but today we have insufficient firebreaks in a large number of areas throughout Queensland. While this government and the minister talk about investing in the Rural Fire Service, we have brave volunteers calling out the fact that their knowledge and experience are being overlooked. While this government and the minister talk about taking notice of warnings, we know that 300 fire warning signs were ripped down across Queensland and replaced with just 64. The truth is that, among the bravery of the responders and the pain being felt by Queenslanders, we now know there are questions surrounding the safety of almost 250 Rural Fire Service appliances.

People across Queensland take steps to protect their community from bushfire every year, and their efforts should not be stymied by a government that has dropped the ball. It is time for this minister and this government to heed the warnings, because every time they fail to do so they put more Queenslanders at risk this bushfire season.