



Speech By  
**James Lister**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 November 2023

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Southern Downs Electorate, Bushfires**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.13 pm): I rise to speak to the House about the fires which have occurred in South-West Queensland and in my electorate of Southern Downs. Members would be aware that the areas south-west of Millmerran in Cypress Gardens experienced fires in which homes and property were lost. Also on the eastern side of my electorate of Southern Downs, the townships of Dalveen and Wallangarra experienced fires. They are dealing with it very well. The rural fire brigade emergency services did a great job. I acknowledge that the state government has sent the department of communities and other agencies into those towns to assist locals, which is great to see.

I would like to point out that it is not just in the townships where there has been damage. Fire has ravaged the pastures of many of our primary producers. This has left them without feed for their animals and also with damage to fences. This is very serious in that stock cannot be confined to the landholder's property. I would ask the state government to be mindful of the need to assist farmers who have lost fences. I know that in the past they have co-contributed with the federal government to a scheme to assist farmers with replacing fences damaged by fires, but I ask that they be mindful of the fact that it is sometimes difficult to obtain contractors at the moment. I ask that they let the farmers do so themselves and claim the amount, or at least allow the scheme to operate for long enough so that those who are affected are able to get contractors to do their fences for them and charge it back.

I note the presence in the chamber of the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. I ask that the state government, without delay, move to repair the Wallangarra railway line. I have written to the minister about this. It is an important line in my electorate for the businesses that rely on the tourist trade. That line takes the Southern Downs steam railway to Wallangarra. Many of the wineries and shops depend on people who seek that experience. It is also a very strategically important line in that it provides access to the military presence at Wallangarra and Jennings just over the border, where very important strategic reserves of engineering stores are kept, plus explosive ordnance—shells, bullets and so forth. In a national emergency we may well need rail access to those sites to access those stores. I was very sad to see that there was damage to the line. One would not think the wooden structures would be able to burn as they were so strong and such hard wood, but, nevertheless, they did. Until those several bridges are replaced, trains will not be able to operate on that line. I implore the government to act without delay to restore that railway line to operation.