




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 24 October 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Bushfires; Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.54 am): I start by acknowledging the Queensland Police Service ministerial liaison officer in my office, Inspector Don Baillie, who is celebrating his birthday today. He is a hard worker and I know that he is well known to many members of this House.

Notwithstanding the outstanding work of the Rural Fire Service and partner agencies, difficult weather conditions are fuelling and fanning bushfires in a number of locations across the state, creating challenging circumstances for many Queenslanders. Our thoughts are with all of those people who have been impacted by these ongoing events. I also want to sincerely thank all of our firefighters, disaster management and Fire and Emergency Services personnel and other partners who are working around the clock to protect their fellow Queenslanders and their properties.

The government deliberately increased the investment in our aerial firefighting capability in this year's state budget—an extra commitment of over \$17 million over three years to boost the fleet. To support the large air tanker and other aerial assets, that investment this season has already delivered additional aircraft capability, including the Black Hawk helicopter water-bombing aircraft based at Bundaberg. Since September, more than 14 million litres of water and fire retardant have been dropped in operations undertaken to keep Queenslanders safe. This fire season our firefighting aircraft have accumulated in excess of 2,000 hours in the air. As the Premier said, it was only prudent in the face of a protracted fire season that we have now extended this critical aerial firefighting capability. With volatile weather conditions upon us, I urge everyone to stay alert to the dangers ahead, keep up to date with the warnings from authorities and have a plan in place to leave quickly if required.

With the state facing a protracted fire season, strong leadership is critical. I want to thank Commissioner Greg Leach AFSM for his dedicated efforts over the last four years. Commissioner Leach has secured a new role in his home state of Victoria and steps down from his role here in Queensland this Friday, and I know that he is looking forward to being closer to his family. I can announce that current Acting Deputy Commissioner Stephen Smith AFSM will take up the role of acting commissioner until the permanent position can be filled following a full and proper recruitment process. With almost 30 years of service in Fire and Emergency Services, Acting Deputy Commissioner Smith has extensive knowledge, skills and experience in emergency management, both here in Queensland and internationally.

Other leadership changes are being put in place as Queensland Fire and Emergency Services undergoes historic reform. That reform will see the establishment of the Queensland Fire Department and the Rural Fire Service as its own entity within the department. I am advised by Commissioner Leach that current Deputy Commissioner Mike Wassing AFSM will serve as the interim chief officer of the

Rural Fire Service. I am advised that the interim deputy commissioner of the Fire and Rescue Service will be current Acting Deputy Commissioner Kev Walsh AFSM and the interim chief operating officer of Corporate Services will be current Acting Deputy Commissioner Adam Stevenson. Further announcements about other leadership roles will be made by the department in due course. Each member of the executive leadership team brings a wealth of experience to these roles and we wish them well as they undertake their important work on behalf of all Queenslanders.