

Question on Notice
No. 1905
Asked on 27 November 2019

MR J COSTIGAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (HON C CRAWFORD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent bushfire on the Capricorn Coast—

Will the Minister confirm that a request by a member of the Volunteer Local Rural Fire Brigade to back-burn, aimed at controlling the fire, was denied by a representative of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services?

ANSWER:

I am advised by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) that command and control is a critical part of managing operations when responding to a fire. Depending on the scale and nature of the incident, the person in control will vary from incident to incident and can include a local volunteer, a QFES paid staff member or even an officer deployed from interstate.

All crews attending the fire take direction from the Incident Controller regardless of whether they are volunteers or paid staff.

QFES has advised that backburning operations are strategies for indirect fire containment or protection of assets. Decisions around backburning require additional guidance to ensure that any backburning operation is well informed, well planned and carefully coordinated. This is to ensure that increased risks associated with these operations are balanced appropriately with broader fire strategies, have the required allocation of resources, and are considerate of critical timings.

In these particular cases, authorisation to undertake backburning operation requires the approval of the Incident Controller, rather than with crews on the ground. Requiring Incident Controller approval for backburning has been QFES protocol for many years and helps to ensure that all backburning is well coordinated and communicated for the safety of all firefighters and for the Queensland community.