

Question on Notice

No. 1041

Asked on 12 September 2023

MR S ANDREW ASKED THE MINISTER FOR POLICE AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (HON M RYAN) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise (a) how many 'hazard reduction burns' have been carried out in Queensland this year (reported separately by region and total area in hectares), (b) how many 'hazard reduction burns' are planned over the next few months to reduce the risk and severity of the state's bushfire season and (c) the number of 'hazard reduction burns' (by way of total hectares) that were conducted in 2021 and 2022?

ANSWER:

Bushfire mitigation is a shared responsibility between many partners, particularly land management agencies, where Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) plays a coordination and leadership role.

I am advised by QFES that a number of factors can influence the undertaking of hazard reduction burns, particularly the requirement for suitable weather conditions to conduct the burn itself and the antecedent climatic influences which affect the dryness of the vegetation and soil.

In 2021, QFES and its partners undertook the last year of Operation Cool Burn which was a seasonal operations period focussed on bushfire risk mitigation. In January 2022, QFES and its partners moved to a year-round risk-based mitigation program, known as Operation Sesbania. This recognises that, with our changing climate, the windows of opportunity for mitigation activities especially hazard reduction burning are limited, and activities need to be undertaken whenever conditions allow.

Operation Sesbania also follows a multi-year program so that activities which can't be completed in one year are undertaken as soon as conditions allow. I have been advised by QFES that given the widely varying conditions across Queensland, it is not possible to state the number of burns to be conducted over the next few months, as there are many variables to consider.

Both Operation Sesbania and Operation Cool Burn include a wide variety of mitigation activities including hazard reduction activities of burning and slashing and upgrades to firebreaks and community engagement to support preparedness.

It is important to note that data on hazard reduction burns is based on reports received from multiple partners including private landholders, councils and other government agencies as well as directly from brigades.

I am advised by QFES that new and/or updated data is added frequently, in many cases retrospectively for burns undertaken by partners that have previously occurred. As such, the

2023 year to date figures are incomplete and will likely increase in addition to burns yet to be undertaken.

It is also important to note that this data only includes a small portion of the burns undertaken by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, who report the majority of their burns separately.

In 2023 (to 28 September 2023), QFES and its partners have reported the following burns in each region, for the Brisbane Region 81 burns totalling 4,663 hectares, for South Eastern Region 59 burns totalling 2,141 hectares, for South Western Region 33 burns totalling 38,304 hectares, for North Coast Region 80 burns totalling 5,001 hectares, for Central Region 38 burns totalling 478 hectares, for Northern Region 40 burns totalling 23,889 hectares and for Far Northern Region 88 burns totalling 28,936 hectares.

For the whole of state for the full year in 2021 there were 150 burns undertaken totalling 62,465 hectares and for the full year in 2022 there were 267 burns undertaken totalling 100,452 hectares.