

Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

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SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.40 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the motion moved by the Premier. The bushfires in Central Queensland in late 2018 were unprecedented fires coming off the back of weather conditions that included high temperatures, low humidity and hot gusty winds. It felt like a dry cyclone and it caused fear and panic. Central Queenslanders though are tough and in the last few years we have endured a category 5 cyclone, a major flood and unprecedented weather conditions that caused extremely serious bushfires. For two weeks in November and December last year, Queenslanders battled more than 1,000 fires across the state for 24 hours a day. The unprecedented bushfire crisis was a traumatic event for our community. However, the resilience of our communities, such as The Caves, Gracemere, Stanwell and Alton Downs, during the bushfires was nothing short of remarkable.

The role of emergency services in assisting residents, businesses and landholders was invaluable. I saw the local, permanent and volunteer firefighters, backed by colleagues from other parts of Queensland and interstate, do a wonderful job at protecting the people and their property in Central Queensland. They are incredibly brave men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our community. The Rural Fire Service volunteers from Bungundarra, The Caves, Keppel Sands, Cawarral, Tanby and Adelaide Park brigades within my electorate all rose to the occasion. The fire and rescue stations at Emu Park, North Rockhampton and Yeppoon played an incredibly important role too. I want to thank in particular The Caves Rural Fire Brigade, QFES personnel and SES volunteers. These men and women did an amazing job containing the fire at The Caves. They sacrificed their time, but also made significant financial sacrifices as well. They missed work or running their businesses in order to keep our community safe. Volunteer firefighters like Brad had been volunteering fighting fires down south at Mount Larcom for days and then came home to The Caves where they were fighting their very own fire. Brad was fighting fires for over eight days.

The Caves Rural Fire Brigade volunteer Jenny Kingston is the behind-the-scenes angel of the brigade. She cooks for the men and women firefighters, has the fridges stocked with water, soft drinks and Powerade and when I visited the brigade she had a hearty chicken gravy dish simmering away in the slow cooker ready for the men and women when they returned. Thanks so much, Jenny, for all that you do.

The smooth preparation for and recovery after the bushfires was a credit to the cooperation between all levels of government, including Rockhampton and Livingstone mayors, their respective local disaster management groups, the member for Rockhampton and all of the respective state agencies involved. Thank you to all of our local firefighters, both the volunteers and officers, who left their families to help keep our local families safe. We love your work.