

Queensland Parliament Hansard Green


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SUBJECT: Mining Tragedy; Central Queensland, Bushfires

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

Mining Tragedy; Central Queensland, Bushfires

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.20 pm): I rise to reflect on the tragic and horrific bushfires that we experienced recently in Central Queensland at Cobraball, west of Yeppoon. I would also like to pass on my sincere condolences to the family, friends and co-workers of the miner who sadly passed away at the underground coalmine at Carborough Downs at Coppabella. It is a real tragedy. Given that we have had seven lives lost in the past 18 months, I think we need to have in this place more of a conversation about that. I offer my condolences to the family and friends of that miner.

In recent weeks in Central Queensland we have experienced a really tragic and difficult time because of horrific bushfires. Over 12,000 hectares of land west of Yeppoon were burnt and 15 homes were destroyed.

Mr Boyce: You didn't want an inquiry last year.

Mrs LAUGA: Those opposite want to turn this into a political point-scoring exercise, which they have been doing over the past couple of weeks—whether that be about rural firefighters—

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs LAUGA: I take those interjections from those opposite. This is a very serious matter. Fifteen homes have been lost. People's lives were at risk. I do not think this issue is a laughing matter. Those opposite need to take the issue very seriously, because the people of Central Queensland and the people of Queensland more broadly are very concerned about the bushfire risk. They are having conversations on a daily basis now about how we need to protect and mitigate against these kinds of disasters in the future. Thousands of livestock were destroyed. I invite the member for Callide to come to Yeppoon, to Cobraball, to Lake Mary and to Bungundarra to talk to the people there who have been affected—those farmers and graziers whom those opposite purport to represent, yet want to make political point-scoring exercises out of the tragic circumstances that those people experienced.

A government member interjected.

Mrs LAUGA: It is a shame. How low will the LNP go with its political point-scoring and scaremongering while Queensland is in a state fire emergency, putting lives at risk with misinformation and lies? I was absolutely shocked when National Party backbencher Barnaby Joyce said, in the height of a disaster—

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs LAUGA: It is not a laughing matter. In the height of that disaster, National Party backbencher Barnaby Joyce said of the two people who died in the bushfires in New South Wales that they had most likely voted for the Greens. The Greens were equally responsible for stupid comments made during the height of those disasters.

Politicians from Canberra making stupid comments in the media in the midst of a disaster made me and the people in my community very cranky. Those comments were insensitive to the communities who were affected—the people who lost their lives, who lost their homes, who lost crops or livestock. Those comments were insensitive to the firefighters—the officers and volunteers—who put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe. Those comments were insensitive to every single person who played a role in fighting these fires and to my entire community. Australians expect that our No. 1 priority at the moment is to save lives and properties and help people who have been affected get back on their feet.

There has been a significant amount of outright lies told by the LNP and One Nation about our government's bushfire hazard mitigation policies. We know that, since January this year, the Department of Environment and Science has conducted 296 planned burns in our national parks and state forests, covering more than one million hectares. This is the largest area of planned burns undertaken in six years and well above the 600,000 hectares that were burnt under the LNP in three

years. In April this year, we launched Operation Cool Burn and encouraged landowners to work with their local fire wardens to undertake hazard reduction burns. Over that time, more than 15,000 hectares were burnt. Since 2015 our government has approved on average 27,463 hazard reduction permits each year, which is 1,300 more permits than the highest number of permits issued when those opposite were in government. Let us not forget that it was the Newman government that slashed \$10 million from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service salaries budget, which meant that 60 fewer rangers were out there to look after protected areas across Queensland.

Preparing for and responding to natural disasters has always been a part of Queensland's life. Queensland is the most natural disaster-prone state in Australia. We now face challenges that climate change presents in understanding and preparing for current and future disasters. It is true that the fire at Cobraball west of Yeppoon was a human caused disaster, but the ferocity of the fire and the speed at which it went was directly as a result of the conditions and the weather.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Before I call the member for Burdekin, member for Keppel, you used unparliamentary language in your speech. I ask you to withdraw.

Mrs LAUGA: I withdraw.