

Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

DATE: 13/02/2019

FILE: 13022019_000645_LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY_GREEN CHAMBER.DOCX

SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.43 pm): Firstly, I would like to address some of the comments made by those opposite and reaffirm that I rise tonight to speak against this motion. I think it is quite interesting that tonight is the first time I have ever heard those opposite talk about the importance of biodiversity and the importance of our national parks. If the member for Warrego and those opposite want to save national parks, they could pick up the phone and talk to their federal colleagues and get them to stop the closure of the Charon Point Conservation Park near Shoalwater Bay—the same national park that the federal government wants to acquire to allow for the expansion of the Singaporean-Australian military training expansion. Stand up and fight—

Mr Millar: Speak to the motion.

Mrs LAUGA: I am talking about national parks. You want to talk about national parks; I am talking about national parks. Those opposite can stand up and fight for our national parks by picking up the phone today and talking to their federal defence minister and saying, 'We want to save some national parks.'

If those opposite want to talk publicly about the value of our firefighters and volunteers, why not include something to that effect in this motion? All this motion talks about is ways in which they are being critical of our rural firefighters and of our processes. There is actually nothing in the motion that supports our firefighters. That is what I am getting up here today to do. While we are talking about landholders and consulting with landholders, it is landholders who are often the rural firefighters—they are the ones doing the hazard reduction burns. To say that the rural fires do not consult with landholders is outright ludicrous.

I see no need to hold a parliamentary inquiry when I witnessed an outstanding and absolutely fantastic response from Queensland firefighters to catastrophic bushfire conditions in our community—unprecedented catastrophic bushfire conditions. 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 Keppel. 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 saw a system that worked. I have seen it before in Central Queensland after Cyclone Marcia in 2015, after the Fitzroy floods in 2017 and again in 2018 after the Queensland bushfires. Sure there are ways in which we can improve the way we respond to and recover after natural disasters, but I can assure you that the people leading the charge in response and recovery to natural disasters in Queensland, and those who review the whole process, are world-leading experts.

What we are witnessing here tonight is those opposite trying to use every opportunity to politicise natural disasters in our state—trying to use every opportunity to blow the disaster up into a political storm. We saw those opposite yesterday and again today preying on the devastating floods in North and Far North Queensland to try to turn this into a blatant political point-scoring exercise. We see it again tonight. Those opposite are trying again to turn unprecedented bushfire conditions and huge firefighting operations into a political firestorm—no pun intended. The people of Queensland can see through their shallow plan.

There is no need for a parliamentary inquiry when we have the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management, IGEM. IGEM was in fact established by those opposite in 2014 under the Newman government to independently review and assess disaster management arrangements in Queensland. The minister of the day, Jack Dempsey, in his ministerial statement on 26 November 2014, said—

Yet another first for Queensland is the establishment of the Inspector-General Emergency Management, whose independent oversight maintains world-leading standards in emergency and disaster management.

The member for Everton in a speech on 30 August 2016 supported the establishment of the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management, which was tasked with reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of disaster management in Queensland. In speaking on the bill which established IGEM in 2014, a number of members opposite spoke in support including the member for Broadwater, the then member for Mundingburra. He said—

I rise to make a contribution in steadfast support of the Disaster Management Amendment Bill and I commend the minister for the bill.

Even the member for Toowoomba North backed in the bill. He said—

From my point of view, I think this is a good bill. I think that the minister is to be commended for introducing it. It simplifies the emergency management structure.

(Time expired)