



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Australian Bushfires

SPEECH

Tuesday, 11 February 2020

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 11 February 2020	Source House
Page 86	Proof Yes
Questioner	Responder
Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP	Question No.

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (16:34): Every season, I enjoy going on a road trip around my electorate of Fairfax. Only a few weeks ago my summer road trip was all about the bushfires, for obvious reasons. On the Sunshine Coast, particularly in the areas of Peregrian Beach and Peregrian Springs, we experienced bushfires towards the end of last year. Also towards the event of last year, this parliament began an inquiry into the intensity and frequency of bushfires. That's an inquiry that I'll be leading as chair of the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy.

It was therefore a worthwhile opportunity during that summer road trip to meet with locals in my area who have hands-on experience and to listen and to learn. To them, I'm very grateful. I met with Tice and his two sons, Lee and Lawrence. Tice is a Gubbi Gubbi man. As a Gubbi Gubbi Kabi Kabi fella, he taught me things about cycle burns that the Indigenous people have been doing for God knows how many years in this country—lessons that have partly been lost. He spoke to me about the frustration of land being locked up and not being able to be accessed. He spoke to me about the need for the next generation to learn and understand.

I met with the local rural fire brigades and their various representatives. They were telling me about their frustration with how hard they work with bureaucracy but with different tiers of government not being aligned and, again, the need to have hazard reduction efforts and better command and control. I met with wonderful people like the Salvos and the people at the Coolum surf lifesaving club. They were people who were there to help either the workers who fight the fires or, indeed, the people who were impacted and to understand their supply chain and logistics.

I met with the people who were directly impacted, the residents of Peregrian Beach. They spoke about the need for evacuation plans, the importance of mental health issues and the importance of technology. Then I met with technology businesses. One in particular was Fireball International, a company that's here in Canberra this week. That's a company that already has real-time, automated, intelligent systems that can detect and, within minutes, report on fires. They use this in California. These are the sorts of technologies we need to be looking at here in Australia. There is no silver bullet. There is no one idea. But we as a country need to work collectively to make sure that we mitigate this type of catastrophe so that it doesn't happen again.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:37 to 16 : 48