Every Queensland community deserves to be a liveable one

2026 LGAQ Annual Conference – QLD Fire Permit System Reform

Who is the key contact for this motion? (required)	*Megan Connolly – Corporate Strategy Specialist*
Submitting council (required)	*Gladstone Regional Council*
Supporting ROC (if applicable)	*n/a*
Council resolution # (required)	*TBC*
Date of council resolution (required)	*TBC*
☐ Does this motion have state-wide relevance? *For a motion to be accepted, it must have state-wide relevance / this box must be ticked.*	
Was this motion suggested by a third party? No	
Title of motion (required)	Qld Fire Permit System Reform
Motion (required)	That the LGAQ calls on the State Government to: Review and modernise Queensland's Permit to Light Fire (PTLF) framework by adopting a risk-based approach to planned burning activities; and Develop a streamlined approval pathway for low-risk planned burns undertaken by suitably qualified landholders, land managers and authorised personnel—similar to the approach adopted in New South Wales—while maintaining appropriate regulatory oversight for higher-risk burning activities.
What is the desired outcome sought? (required) 200-word limit	The desired outcome is a modern, risk-based fire permit framework in Queensland that enables efficient, timely and safe delivery of planned burns. This includes the introduction of a streamlined approval pathway—such as a code-based or notice-based system—for low-risk burns undertaken by qualified personnel, while retaining appropriate regulatory controls for higher-risk activities.

	The reform aims to reduce unnecessary administrative burden on local governments, landholders and fire agencies, improve consistency in permit conditions, and allow Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) to prioritise high-risk activities. Ultimately, the outcome will support more effective hazard reduction, improve community safety, enhance ecological outcomes, and enable better integration of First Nations cultural burning practices within a clear and supported regulatory framework.
Background (required) 350-word limit	Queensland's current Permit to Light Fire (PTLF) framework applies uniform approval requirements to all planned burns, regardless of their scale, complexity, or level of risk. Local governments undertake planned burning programs to reduce bushfire risk, protect community assets, and maintain ecological health. However, the existing system requires permits for all burns, including routine, low-risk activities conducted by trained professionals. This "one-size-fits-all" approach creates unnecessary administrative burden, delays operational delivery, and limits the ability to complete burns within optimal seasonal windows. Delays in hazard reduction increase the likelihood of more severe bushfires later in the year, placing communities, infrastructure, and the environment at greater risk. The framework also produces inconsistent permit conditions depending on individual assessment and does not adequately recognise the capability of local government fire practitioners. Importantly, it also fails to properly recognise and enable First Nations cultural burning practices, which are typically low-intensity, risk-informed, and guided by deep ecological knowledge developed over thousands of years.

	In contrast, New South Wales operates under a risk-based model through the Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code, which provides a streamlined approval pathway for low-risk burns via Hazard Reduction Certificates, while retaining oversight for more complex or higher-risk activities. Adopting a similar risk-based approach in Queensland would: • Enable regulatory effort to focus on higher-risk burns • Reduce administrative inefficiencies • Improve consistency in permit conditions • Increase the availability of viable burn windows • Better recognise the capability of trained practitioners • Support and expand the application of First Nations cultural burning practices
Case study/ Example (optional) 350-word limit	Since mid-2025, new conditions applied to Permits to Light issued to Council now require burns to occur only when specified wind gust thresholds are met. Previously, permit conditions aligned with average forecast wind speeds rather than peak gusts. In practice, the Rural Fire Service Queensland, Area Manager for Gladstone has applied varying gust thresholds, typically ranging between 20 km/h and 25 km/h. While these changes are intended to manage perceived operational risks, they have had a significant impact on the availability of suitable burn windows. To assess this impact, weather data from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) Gladstone Airport station was analysed over the period 1 September 2024 to 6 May 2026 (approximately 87 work weeks). Out of 438 weekdays: • 94% (413 days) recorded 9:00 am wind speeds below 25 km/h

	• 75% (329 days) recorded 9:00 am wind speeds below 20 km/h These figures indicate that, under traditional average wind speed thresholds, suitable burn conditions are available on the majority of operational days. In contrast, when wind gusts are considered (435 weekdays analysed): • Only 6% (24 days) recorded maximum daily gusts below 25 km/h • Only 0.46% (2 days) recorded maximum gusts below 20 km/h This represents a dramatic reduction in eligible burn days when gust thresholds are incorporated into permit conditions. In addition, there is increasing awareness of inconsistencies in how these conditions are being applied by other Fire Wardens in our region. We have had occurrences where a fire permit written by a local Fire Warden have not been subject to the same wind gust restrictions. These inconsistencies create uncertainty and significantly constrain operational planning. The inclusion of the wind gust criteria effectively reduces the burn window to an impracticable level. This case study highlights a significant limitation in the current permit framework: the conditions are overly restrictive, not risk-based, and do not adequately reflect operational realities or the capability of trained fire practitioners.