



**Flinders Electorate Office - Appeal to Premier for more staff
6 June 2005**

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold has appealed to Premier Mike Rann for more staff to help meet the needs of people living in the electorate, after her requests have been ignored by the Treasurer Kevin Foley.

Speaking in State Parliament last week, she said the January bushfire and the impending drought had added to an already heavy workload for her electorate staff in the two offices at Port Lincoln and Ceduna.

"We are now in the dangerous phase after a traumatic event when the accumulated mental and emotional stress can manifest itself in depression, anxiety and possible traumatic stress disorders. My staff and I have been at the forefront of working for bushfire victims. The additional workload has not been recognised by the government.

"I am gravely concerned too for many of my farming and rural families, some of whom are facing another year without income."

Mrs Penfold said the demands for information and help from her office was illustrated by the fact that during March, her website had 29,800 hits.

"The Flinders electorate is entitled to only 2.1 full time equivalent staff members and I pay an extra 1.2 staff members out of my own pocket," she said.

"Soon after Labor came into government, most electorate offices in the State had their electorate staff doubled, largely for occupational health and safety reasons. However, Flinders did not receive any additional staffing entitlement."

Mrs Penfold said the travel she was required to undertake in the Flinders electorate, which covers 32,000 square kilometres, was not taken into account as a health and safety issue.

She said she often had to drive long distances to visit parts of the electorate, such as Ceduna, after attending late night sessions of Parliament and electorate functions. She said she sometimes had to take a staff member with her to help with the driving, which meant there was one less person to handle the many telephone calls and other inquiries back in the office.

Mrs Penfold has been asking for an extra 0.3 full time equivalent staff member for more than 12 months but the Treasurer has told her there is no money for it.

Yet the government quickly appointed 16 additional staff following the recent ministerial shuffle.

"Ministerial staffers are paid much more than staffers working in electorate offices, yet the government found funding for 16 additional positions for themselves but could not find funding for a 0.3 position in my electorate," Mrs Penfold said.

“In addition, I noted that in this State budget there are 1,842 more public servants than were budgeted for last time.

“All I am asking is for staffing levels in Port Lincoln and Ceduna to be brought to a comparable level with metropolitan electorate offices,” she said.