



**Safety of Children? Ask Their Parents!**  
**26 February 2009**

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold believes parents should have been consulted before making any decision to close schools.

Mrs Penfold said she has been inundated with calls from irate parents who were told without warning that schools would be closed the following day.

Many parents have told her that the safest place on 'a day of extreme fire risk' would be at the school where they are generally located in a cleared area with a green oval and carparks. All schools have in place their bush fire plans for the safety and well being of students and staff.

"This appears to be a knee jerk reaction to the Victorian fires. There is no comparison between the areas. Victoria is mountainous country with tall timber whereas Eyre Peninsula is largely flat and much has been drought stricken. Our biggest danger is the national parks that cover over 40% of the region which have inadequate fire breaks and controlled burns to make them safe," Mrs. Penfold said.

It is not only the inconvenience for families having to suddenly rearrange work and other commitments. Many isolated farm houses are without air-conditioning or even good phone connections. Their own fire plans in many cases would be to relocate to the nearest town or in the case of upper Eyre Peninsula possibly to Miltaburra and Karcultaby Area Schools that are schools in paddocks but natural gathering places for these remote communities.

"Parents should be trusted to make their own decision regarding the safety of their children. Those who want to keep their children home on very hot days, let it be their choice, but don't penalise them with a truancy mark against their child. Provide the schools instead with school buses that have air-conditioning, seat belts and good communications equipment", Mrs Penfold said.

ENDS