



**SA Ambulance
29 July 1999**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Sir, as you would be well aware, I take every available opportunity to promote the electorate of Flinders on the Eyre Peninsula. On this occasion I would like to praise the dedicated efforts of our SA Ambulance Service, both paid workers and volunteers. Eyre Peninsula encompasses an area of approximately 45 000 square kilometres, and many areas are sparsely populated. This means that, in a very small community, the burden of volunteering falls on very few people who have the health, skills and desire to volunteer. Despite the difficulties of lack of population and vast distances, volunteer ambulance stations are located at Ceduna, Cummins, Coffin Bay, Elliston, Streaky Bay, Tumby Bay, Lock, Wudinna and Yalata, and it is a credit to these communities that this is the case.

Approximately 100 volunteer ambulance officers provide essential community service on the Eyre Peninsula, supported by full-time officers stationed at Whyalla, Port Lincoln and Ceduna. Clinical team leaders who are paramedics very ably provide training and support to the volunteer teams. South Australian Ambulance Service has progressively upgraded the ambulance fleet in volunteer stations with diesel ambulances, which have proved to be more reliable in remote areas of Eyre Peninsula, where many roads are unsealed, badly corrugated and provide very dusty and trying working conditions.

All volunteer stations on the Eyre Peninsula and West Coast are now linked and tasked by the Regional Communications Centre located in Port Pirie. The fact that tasks are distributed from a location away from the region means that good communications become even more vital to the service. Maintaining effective communications has been a challenge for SA Ambulance Service in the area, as reliance on HF and VHF radio systems has not always been satisfactory. Volunteers are very supportive of the State Government initiative to introduce a Government radio network. However, they are also aware of the extended time frame involved in such a major project.

Satellite telephone systems were trialled in remote areas of the State and found to be extremely reliable and beneficial to ambulance operations. Not only do satellite telephones afford a mantle of safety for volunteer officers but they also provide an essential link to communication centres, local hospitals and, if required, specialist medical advice from major metropolitan hospitals. A number of communities recognised the advantage of satellite telephones and the ensuing patient care benefits and commenced fundraising to purchase satellite phones for their volunteer ambulances. SA Ambulance Service management also recognised the advantages of satellite telephones and funded the purchase and installation of the phones in all new vehicles allocated to volunteer ambulance stations in the districts that had not already provided phones for themselves. Given that digital and analogue phones work only in isolated pockets on the Eyre Peninsula and not in remote areas where volunteer services are often operating, a joint community—SA Ambulance Service initiative has now resulted in every volunteer ambulance operating in the district being equipped with satellite telephones. The 11 satellite phones now in operation will ensure effective communication until the Government radio network roll out is completed in this part of the State, which is estimated, I believe, to be in the year 2001 or 2002.

A full-time ambulance officer, Mr Leon Cutting, was appointed in Ceduna in January 1999, following successful lobbying by community groups. This initiative has been extremely well received by volunteers and the community in general. Port Lincoln has recently appointed a paramedic team leader, Mr Steven Casey, to the local service. This appointment not only provides the community with paramedic skills in the pre-hospital environment but also assists volunteer services in the surrounding towns by way of training, support and back-up response to significant incidents.

Maintaining a volunteer ambulance service in the district is both difficult and challenging at a time when rural communities are experiencing declining populations and volunteerism is in decline. Communities in this district acknowledge that the very existence of an ambulance service in every town is reliant entirely on community involvement and, as such, invariably respond to the call for help. It is heartening to note that 30 new volunteers have been recruited into the volunteer ambulance service over the past 12 months. I feel that the new appointments in Ceduna and Port Lincoln have been instrumental in bringing about this result. No doubt the new volunteers will serve their communities diligently, and I commend them for their efforts and commitment. Recently Mr John Stevens, Mrs Lynette Clyde and Mrs Margaret Foster from Lock were awarded service awards in recognition of their years of service to SA Ambulance Service and St John.

Country Fire Service 20 February 2003

Mr BROKENSHIRE (Mawson): I move: That this house congratulates all Country Fire Service volunteers and staff and other government agency personnel for their willingness, dedication and professionalism in answering the call for assistance from Victoria during the recent bushfire disasters.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I support the motion. I congratulate members of country and metropolitan fire services on willingly travelling interstate to assist with fighting the bushfires there. I am particularly proud that Region 6, the Country Fire Service region that covers my electorate, provided more volunteer firefighters than any other region. Considering our small population base, that is a magnificent effort. It is proof, once again, of the absolutely tremendous community spirit of the West Coast people. The interstate call for assistance came at a time of high risk locally, when the danger of bushfires in our own region was extreme. Those who remained bore a greater burden in ensuring that the properties and homes of their colleagues were kept safe. The families and businesses of the volunteers also bore a share of the sacrifice. Families, of course, had the worry that their loved ones might be injured. The possibility of death through being caught in a situation from which there is no escape is always present in the mind in such circumstances.

Some 95 volunteers, some of whom did two tours of duty, and three staff members from Eyre Peninsula answered the call for help. The staff members were Region 6 Regional Commander, Neil Ellis, and Sonia Post and Simon Vogel, and the names of those who went is like a roll call of Eyre Peninsula towns and districts. The volunteers and the fire brigades include:

***Waddikee:** Phil Harradine and Leon Joyce

***Lincoln:** Peter Smart, Rob Chambers, David Bryant, Steve Else, Xandra Porter, Andrew Brown and Greg Napier

***Tumby Bay:** Gene Holliday, Brad Holliday, Mathew Bawden, Stephen Nankivell, Troy Holliday, Quentin Russ, Paul Southon, Donald Bawden, Brett Pitman, Michael Butler, Michael Kroemer and Chris Daniell

x**Rudall:** Mel Wegner, Barry Lovegrove, Graham Phelps and Michael Dennis

x**Wharminda:** Kieran Masters, John Masters and Gavin Masters

x**Wangary:** Terry Rowsell and Steve Nettle

x**Cowell:** Brian Young, Brian Mullan, Larry Young, Lindsay Carmody, Kym Hanson and Christopher Low. (Christopher is a student of Cowell's aquaculture course and a former Young Citizen of the Year for Naracoorte)

x**Cummins:** Terry Vigar, Russell Branson and Julie Ophoff

x**North Shields:** Glen Doughty, Jeff Poole and Shaun Kurovec

x**Greenpatch:** Barry Hetherington, Ken Pobke and Gordon Lakin

x**Coffin Bay:** Ben Jarmyn, Michael Terrell, William Philip, Zach Pepworth, Michael Armstrong and Michael Bowyer

x**White Flat:** Kym Eagle, Doug Clarke and Darren Mead

x**Wudinna:** David Simpson, Craig Jericho, David Greatbatch and Shane Rigden

x**Mount Wedge:** Ian Penna

x**Elliston:** Graham Meyers

x**Cleve:** Shaun Irrang

x**Mount Hope:** Thomas Millard

x**Nunjirkompita:** Daryl Lawrie and Bradley Ross

x**Poochera:** Peter Fleming

x**Gum Flat:** Trent Harris, Michael Evans, John Flavel and Colin Dickson

x**Ungarra:** David Liddicoat and Roger Pepworth

xMangalo: Steven Roberts and Darren Crettenden
xCeduna: Rick McKay, Justin Woolford and Mark Hewitson
xYeelanna: Greg Hurrell
xKarkoo: Michael Agnew
xFar West National Parks and Wildlife Service: Brett Dalzell
xKapinnie: Kym Kenny
xTooligie Hill: Michael Agars and Brett Pearce
xMount Damper: Kym Tree
xPort Neill: Darren Aitchison and Michael Aitchison
*** Lock:** Michael Zerk
xSheringa: Shayne Hastie
xSalt Creek: Mark Carmody; and
xYallunda Flat: David Whait and John Haagmans.

The first three contingents from Eyre Peninsula served in Tallangatta Valley and Dartmouth on the northern side of the Alps, while the fourth and fifth contingents worked around Sale and Orbost on the southern side of the Alps.

Mr Ellis said that it was a huge logistical effort to get people interstate and back to Port Lincoln, and the cooperation of the airlines and charter aircraft was greatly appreciated. He said that their aircraft was unable to land at Albury because of poor visibility, so the firefighters were disembarked at Melbourne Airport and bussed to the fire area. Visibility was between 500 metres and one kilometre at the most. The main task of the volunteers was to protect property and ensure that back-burns were completed and fire perimeters blacked out. Our people crewed Country Fire Authority vehicles. Mr Ellis praised the morale of the volunteers which was always high, despite the long hours they put in, the tediousness of the job and their tiredness.

He was based at Corryong on the incident management team which was looking after a fire edge of some 203 kilometres—and that was just a small part of the total perimeter. The bushfires were burning in terrain even more rugged than the Flinders Ranges. The fires, which were started by lightning strikes, were small to begin with but built into the massive fires that burnt in excess of one million hectares. Mr Rob Chambers, one of the volunteers who did two tours of duty, said that the firefighters on the scene were flat out and all were physically tired. He said that it was good to be able to relieve them so that they could get some rest, and then carry on again when South Australians came home. He said that the whole affected area was so large and the effort was so big that sometimes those in charge did not know where all the firefighters were, so it was an extremely worrying and intense time.

He said that the relief crews cleaned up around houses and did property protection. Mr Haagmans of Yallunda Flat said that it was a real privilege to be there and that it was satisfying to be able to give someone a hand. The people really appreciated it. He said that the weather was mild while he was at the fire and his team mainly undertook back-burning. Nevertheless, visibility was limited to about 500 metres and masks were worn all the time to cope with the smoke. He understood that, after his team returned to South Australia, the people whom they had helped were so relieved that they made a contribution to the Country Fire Service in South Australia, a contribution which was then re-donated to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal.

These are mostly volunteers we are talking about—men and women who do not get paid for being firefighters but who do it for the love of their communities so that those communities are kept safe. The hours given up in training, the self-discipline needed and the willingness to sacrifice self for the good of others are all characteristics that are part of the Country Fire Service. They are also a part of the Anzac tradition that has made Australia the great nation that it is. Seldom are these attributes mentioned. Volunteering and community service are an integral part of the fabric of rural living. I would like to see the day when volunteering and service above self are equally strong in metropolitan and city areas. I commend the motion.