



**Question on Notice
For 8th September 2009**

For the Premier, Hon Mike Rann MP

How much of the \$10M funding from the Federal Government Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements has been recovered by the State Government as a result of the 2005 Wangary Fires?

Have any claims by the State Government been made to the Federal Government's Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements and if so, what are the details?

**EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES -
Question asked 22 June 2006**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Premier confirm that a complete set of all CFS audio tapes, other electronic records and incident logs relating to the Wangary fire is still in the possession of the government and available to the Coroner? The transcript from the Coroner's inquiry into the Wangary fire on 26 May 2006 states:

Some transcripts provided to the inquiry appear to be an incomplete copy of what happened in the fire. . . and that someone has had some discretion as to what is included from all regional talk groups.

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): Whilst I am a member of the CFS, I am not aware of that. I will inquire of the emergency services minister. Certainly, neither have I seen nor do I have in my possession any transcripts or tapes. I will inquire to find out the provenance of the transcripts.

**Motion - House of Assembly 20 October 2005
Eyreial Ag Services**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I move:

That this house requests that the government—

(a) make an ex gratia payment to Kevin Warren of Eyreial Ag Services for expenses incurred in providing his aircraft to fight the January 2005 bushfires on the Lower Eyre Peninsula;

(b) implement recommendations (i) to (iv) of the Bob Smith report requiring the CFS to—

(i) engage regionally-based aerial services during the bushfire seasons;

(ii) review the utility of contracting locally based water bombing aircraft to cover initial responses;

(iii) implement a trial for aerial surveillance services for the 2005-06 bushfire season on Eyre Peninsula;
and

- (iv) examine the utility of entering into contracts for the provision of aerial bushfire surveillance, water bombing and intelligence as a private firefighting unit.

In moving this motion, calling on the South Australian government to make an ex gratia payment to Kevin Warren for the expenses he incurred while fighting the bushfire on Lower Eyre Peninsula, I commend his efforts, as well as those of his son, Tony, and pilot, Derek Hayman, who saved lives and property while putting themselves at risk. To date, Kevin has not received any reimbursement for costs incurred. However, on Monday he rang me and said that he had decided not to put in an account and that he will not request reimbursement of his costs. Very unselfishly, he is prepared to wear those costs as his civic responsibility but, in my view, he should not have to do so. It was interesting that the government made no offer to compensate Mr Warren until the matter was raised by the Hon. Ian Gilfillan in a motion moved in the Legislative Council on 6 July 2005, following which Mr Warren was contacted by the CFS and asked to submit his account. He has not done so, given that he places no emphasis on his efforts and, quite rightly, has to focus on his business of agricultural aerial spraying.

Mr Warren offered his services to the CFS on both the Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning of the bushfire. His offers were not taken up, as stated in the Bob Smith report. Tony Warren provided aerial surveillance and intelligence to ground crews on the Monday evening and dropped water on hot spots. Kevin, his son Tony, and employee Derek Hayman, also took to the air on Tuesday, using their spraying aircraft as water bombers in dangerous conditions to protect homes and property and to provide vital aerial intelligence.

It was not until midday on Black Tuesday that the CFS eventually asked Mr Warren to assist in the firefighting effort. By this time, the fire was raging out of control. I was stunned that Mr Warren was not officially called upon until after midday on Tuesday, and this was done on the basis that he first meet a set of non-negotiable criteria. The CFS message read:

Approval is given to you to utilise a.c.f.t. [aircraft] by 'Warren' of Region 6 subject to the following criteria:

1. Must have \$10 million of public liability insurance.
2. Must have comms [communications] with AAS [Australian Aerial Services] (acft VH-LMA).
3. Pilot(s) and acft must be rated to undertake fire operations tasks.

All not negotiable.

Region 6 DO to confirm in writing.

The signature on the form is indecipherable. This agreement was one we thought would be put in place after the Tulka fire. We have only just received the report on that fire. The Tulka Fire Incident Management Analysis states:

These private bombers were utilised throughout the incident despite directions to the contrary.

Exactly the same thing happened again at the next fire in Wangary—that is, the feeling that 'No, we don't want these aircraft to be involved, despite not having aircraft on Eyre Peninsula.'

An area similar in size to that reaching from south of Adelaide to Two Wells and from the sea to Murray Bridge was in flames. Houses, sheds, implements, livestock and fencing were on fire and, tragically, people were fleeing the flames and choking from the smoke. Communications over this area were blacked out. Roads were impassable. Smoke and ash were blinding. Water supplies did not exist, pipes had buckled and burst.

At a time like this, a message comes through that local aircraft could be utilised for aerial firebombing, provided that some non-negotiable terms were met. How, in a scenario like that, could Mr Warren double his public liability insurance to \$10 million? This criterion made it impossible for him to comply with and be able to fly in official capacity. As my mayor would say, 'Blind Freddy would know that you cannot secure millions of dollars worth of insurance at the last minute'. It is a requirement that should have been dealt with years before.

The CFS wanted Mr Warren to waste precious time filling in forms while the world around him was burning. Mr Warren had no hope of complying with the demands at such short notice, but he flew his planes at his own risk and expense, anyway. It says a great deal for his humanity and compassion that people were of more concern to him than the demands of bureaucracy. He and his pilots saved lives and property. The smoke over the centre of the

fire and to windward was so dense that the planes could only work around the perimeter of the fire. The small settlement of White Flat towards the centre of the stricken area was one of the worst hit. One home remained standing and even that home was partially burnt. Aerial water bombers were requested late Monday afternoon by those on the ground fighting the fire. Under CFS procedures, the approval for provision of aerial bombing aircraft is handled centrally. One of the reasons given for not calling in local aerial water bombers was that the contract for this work was let to another company. Yet, the belated request to Mr Warren on Tuesday confirms that the CFS can call in other aircraft than the official contractor.

The knee-jerk reaction of the government and its ministers is to condemn criticism of volunteer firefighters as though, by this specious action, they will deflect criticism away from where it rightfully belongs. I know that the volunteer firefighters on Lower Eyre Peninsula and the communities that support them would agree wholeheartedly with Mr Warren being reimbursed, but, as I have stated, he has decided not to put in an account as it was his civic duty and he believes that next time, hopefully, there will be bombers on Eyre Peninsula and that he will not be needed. It is still my concern and the concern of the community that he have some kind of a contract that will enable him to self-respond if it is believed to be necessary and if he believes it to be necessary and to be reimbursed.

The events of Black Tuesday emphasise once again that the response to the fires must be immediate and adequate. To help achieve this, the government must implement recommendations (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) on page 79 of the Bob Smith report, which requires the CFS to engage the services of regionally based aerial contractors during the bushfire season as follows:

(i) the CFS develop contractual frameworks which could be used to engage regionally based aerial services with the requirement for extensive local knowledge, to provide bushfire surveillance/intelligence services during the bushfire service.

(ii) the CFS review the utility and efficacy of contracting the use of locally based aircraft capable of undertaking water bombing, benchmarked against current centrally located water bombing services, particularly to cover initial response.

(iii) the CFS, subject to positive assessment of work in recommendation (ii), trial the implementation of these contracts for the provision of aerial surveillance services during the 2005-06 bushfire season for the Eyre Peninsula.

(iv) the CFS examine and communicate to the community the utility/practicality (e.g. in terms of benefits, liability, operational aspects) of entering into contracts for the provision of aerial bushfire surveillance and intelligence, with the aircraft concurrently performing water bombing activities as a private firefighting unit.

These must be put into practice as a matter of urgency before the bushfire season starts in November, preferably before. These recommendations are nothing new. They were included in reports following the major fire at Tulka, south of Port Lincoln, in 2001. During that fire, Kevin Warren and his pilots also fought the fires on their own initiative. Those recommendations from Tulka were in the process of implementation when the current government came to office in 2002, but it has taken a much more devastating fire and the tragic loss of nine lives to get the issue back on the government's radar screen. Those recommendations are included at the back of the Bob Smith report. Number 4.4 recommends 'procedures for use of plant need to be formalised, including protection requirements', which would allow for the CFS to use other plant on a 'call when needed' basis. Under the heading 'Action taken by the CFS since the Tulka fire', it describes this recommendation as 'partially complete' after three years.

After this year's fire the CFS started having lots of meetings with Kevin Warren about coming to some sort of arrangement, but nothing has been finalised and the new bushfire season starts next month. There would not appear to be any other such 'call when needed' agreement in place on Eyre Peninsula for the use of other equipment owned by private individuals, local councils or even the MFS, who have told me that they were not informed of what was happening during the fire at Wangary. The Bob Smith report also shows that recommendation 4.4 also calls for 'spare mobile radio kits [to] be made available for private vehicles, plant, etc.' and this recommendation is described as 'complete'. It has not been implemented either, even though it is noted as complete.

I only have to talk to the mayor about the offers that were made by his council that were not taken up on the Tuesday of the fire. Where were those spare radios on 10 and 11 January of this year? I can assure you that they were not in Kevin Warren's planes. The Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Carmel Zollo, said in another place, 'You—meaning the previous Liberal state government—did absolutely nothing after Tulka, and we have acted.' It was her own government that she was castigating for inaction because it has had three full years to put the Tulka recommendations into practice, not just to say that they are complete, but actually put them in action. It is a

disgrace that the recommendations from the Tulka report were not acted upon, and I put the government on notice to immediately implement Bob Smith's recommendations in relation to contracting regional aircraft and implementing the fire protection.

The volunteer response at ground level on Monday 10 January when the fire started was immediate. CFS brigades were supported by non-members, all of whom appreciated the necessity to not only contain the fire but extinguish it as well. The practice of controlling and containing bushfires must be considered a first step only. It is at this point that responses must be adequate for the circumstances—both the circumstances of the day and the days following.

The volunteers fighting the fire near Wangary on the afternoon and evening of Monday 10 January and Tuesday morning 11 January called for a greater recognition of the dangers of the situation and therefore a more adequate response than was forthcoming at the time. The fires must be extinguished. When 1 800 hectares has been burnt on a Monday night, with a major fire ban day the next day, and fire bombers are not sent across but sent to a 12-hectare fire in the South-East the following morning, there is something very wrong—1 800 hectares, with a huge fire front, has to mean that some of it will still be alight. We must learn from past mistakes and put in place procedures that eliminate these errors.

Surveillance is an important part of prevention, as well as fire control. Country people, especially in the fire season, are ever watchful for telltale signs of smoke indicating a fire has broken out. Ground crews can in the majority of cases identify the fire progress and perimeter. It is those instances when the fire is largely in hilly terrain or national parks that aerial surveillance enables a more targeted response and makes firefighting more efficient and safer for firefighters.

South Australia has had a number of major fires in national parks and conservation parks, and there are many of these on Eyre Peninsula. Access in these areas is difficult and extremely dangerous, since it would be easy for fire crews to be trapped. There is a major concern over there at the moment because the native vegetation for the firefighting plan for Port Lincoln still has not gone through.

Aerial surveillance has been used in the past and has proved extremely beneficial. The cost of aerial surveillance would be minimal in the state's overall firefighting budget since it would only be used during significant fires. The advantages of aerial surveillance intelligence, coupled with crews working on the ground, have been proved.

EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES -

Question on notice to the Minister for Environment & Conservation 10 May 2005 Responded 5 July 2005

National	Heritage	Trust	Funding
Mrs PENFOLD: Has the state government matched the \$2.68 million of National Heritage Trust Funding committed by the Federal government on 25 February 2005 for a package to re-establish farming enterprises in the bushfire ravaged farm land on the lower Eyre Peninsula and if not, why not?			

The Hon. J.D. HILL: I have recently announced together with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries that: The State Government has committed an additional \$2.68 million in assistance, to be matched by the Federal Government, to the lower Eyre Peninsula Agriculture, Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation program.

This program, costed at up to \$5.36 million, will help in the long term re-establishment of farming enterprises while also protecting and enhancing the environment. It will support farmers and land managers with technical and planning advice, as well as providing grants for productivity and natural resource improvement.

While details of the program are currently being worked through with Australian Government officials, the planning support aspects of the program have already commenced.

The program will build on a series of 'Getting Started' workshops, which have helped farmers prepare for the immediate needs of the upcoming agricultural season, including the reintroduction of livestock and the protection of natural resources and biodiversity. An initial property planning workshop program is underway to support management decision making.

The additional funding is on top of more than \$10 million already provided by the State Government for bushfire relief programs.

**Eyre Peninsula Bushfires (Question on notice 12 April 2005)
Response 23 June 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD: How much funding has the state government provided towards recovery and restoration efforts arising from the recent Eyre Peninsula bushfires, what are the details of the services, good and grants provided from this funding and is any of this funding recoverable from insurance and if so, what are the details?

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: Following the Bushfire in January 2005, immediate support to the Lower Eyre Peninsula community included a range of assistance and support grants which Cabinet endorsed on 13 January 2005. The State Government committed \$6 million to provide direct assistance to individuals and families affected by the bushfires. Individual grant programs provided for shelter, food, and basic needs to those affected by the emergency as well as broader support measures.

The list of grant programs approved by Cabinet and comprising the \$6 million fund is as follows:

- xExceptional Circumstances Family Grants
- xLocal Government Support Grant
- xEmergency Farm Business Support Grant
- xBereavement Assistance Grant
- xRural Financial Counselling Grant
- xTransport Subsidy for Donated Fodder Grant
- xEmergency Small Business Support Grant
- xOther Recovery Measures for Farms Grant
- xReturn to School Grant
- xWaiver of Mortgage Stamp Duty, Land Title Fee and Motor Vehicles Charges Relief; and
- xWaiver of Construction Industry Training Fund (CITF) levies.

In addition, to further assist with rural recovery and restoration on the Eyre Peninsula, Cabinet has approved the Lower Eyre Peninsula agriculture, natural resources and biodiversity re-establishment program. The total cost of the program is \$5.360 million, to be funded on a 50:50 basis between the State and the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, on 9 May 2005 Regional Development Minister, Karlene Maywald announced a special \$150,000 assistance package for community recovery initiatives in the fire-affected areas of the Lower Eyre Peninsula.

None of the funding referred to above is recoverable from insurance. However, some of the amounts provided for relief will be recoverable under the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements (NDRA) with the Commonwealth.

EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES - Question on notice to the Minister for Emergency Services 10 May 2005

How has the water bombing capacity of the State's Country Fire Service changed since 2000?

EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES - Question on notice to the Treasurer 12 April 2005

How much funding has been disbursed from the State Disaster Fund since 1 July 2004 and for what purposes? Have any local governments affected by the recent Eyre Peninsula bushfires been funding recipients and if so, what are the details?

**EYRE PENINSULA BUSHFIRES
4 May 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Premier assure the house that the inquiry into the January fires on the West Coast will include an investigation of whether the recommendations of the report into the 2001 Tulka bushfires were implemented? If not, why not?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Premier): It is a very good question, and I would like that to happen. I will bring back a report.

**Aerial Firefighting
3 March 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Can the minister advise how his government has doubled the aerial firefighting capacity of our state, or whether he cannot count? In question time in parliament yesterday the minister advised the house, not once but six times—and I quote two examples: 'We have more than doubled the capacity,' and later: 'This government has doubled the aerial firefighting capacity.' However, I am advised that the only increase in capacity during the term of this government has been the introduction of one bombing helicopter in 2003 supplied by the national fleet and half funded by the federal government with matching—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member quoting from a document?

Mrs PENFOLD: No; from the answer to the question yesterday—'We have more than doubled the capacity,' and 'This government has doubled the aerial firefighting capacity.' It is half funded by the federal government with matching state funding, providing a further 2 750 litres of capacity to the 9 600 litres already available. The minister also stated, 'These people cannot count. They simply cannot count.' Well, perhaps the minister can't.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Emergency Services): There are several allegations; as far as I can ascertain the allegations are I can't count. I can say this: I do a lot better job than poor old Dean did on the night of Operation Wiltshire. I will ask the chief officer to brief me, but it would be a lot easier if the member for Penfold would just go and ask her own emergency services shadow. *Members interjecting:*

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I assume he knows more about it than she does, apparently. *Members interjecting:*

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Let me explain how it works.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will not respond to interjections.

Eyre Peninsula Bushfires 2 March 2005

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Emergency Services advise the house what contract has been put in place to ensure that Eyre Peninsula has firebombing coverage during the remainder of this season, and thereafter, on the same three-minute response time basis provided to the South-East and Mount Lofty Ranges? It is now seven weeks since the Eyre Peninsula fires and we have had only a couple of short visits by firebombers. The existing contract, I understand, does not mention the Eyre Peninsula's requirements, despite the Tulka fire and the subsequent Eyre Peninsula fire illustrating the need.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Emergency Services): I really do think it is an extraordinary question, given that under this government aerial firefighting capacity has been more than doubled.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: The utter ignorance of these people! *Members interjecting:*

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I have to say that it took them a few weeks, but it did not take them long before they decided to play politics with the tragedy on Eyre Peninsula. That is what they have been doing. I will explain something about aerial firefighting. We have more than doubled the capacity. It is then at the disposal of the experts who run the Country Fire Service, principally Euan Ferguson. It is then allocated, according to the priorities of the Country Fire Service.

The last time I travelled with the member for Flinders and took her around, showing her what the government was doing on the peninsula, we flew into Port Lincoln airport and an aerial firefighting bomber was situated there. They had been dispatched there because the people who run the fire service decided that it was appropriate for them to be there on that day assessing risks across the state. For the life of me, I cannot understand what is wrong with that arrangement.

I have also undertaken with the member for Flinders, because she has a particular view about the use of Mr Warren, that on my next visit I will talk to Mr Warren. Can we just give credit where credit is due? This government has doubled the aerial firefighting capacity. I do not remember once in the previous nine years of her government the honourable member ever raising the question of aerial firefighting with her own government—that had a much lesser capacity. Can we give credit where it is due? The Country Fire Service will continue to allocate that increased aerial capacity, according to the judgment of firefighters, not according to the judgments of self-interested politicians.

Mrs PENFOLD: I have a supplementary question. Will the minister advise the house why he has not put a firebomber on Eyre Peninsula for the remainder of the fire danger season? I understand that a dedicated water bomber with local aerotech supervisor is available for Eyre Peninsula but that cabinet has refused funding.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: I thought the member for Flinders would have understood the previous answer. The

reason I have not put an aerial firefighter at Port Lincoln for the rest of the year is that I do not put them anywhere. We give resources; and, again, I stress more than twice the aerial firefighting resources of the previous government. Then we trust the professionals of the Country Fire Service to decide how they are allocated. If it is the proposition of the member for Flinders that an aerial firefighting capacity should be sitting at Port Lincoln on a low fire risk day, while it is not in the Adelaide Hills on a high fire risk day, then I will continue to trust the judgment of the Country Fire Service, not the judgment of the member for Flinders.

Mrs PENFOLD: I have a further supplementary question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Flinders will get the call after the next question.

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Emergency Services advise the house whether the four water bombers that are resourced by the government are enough to cover the requirements of the whole of South Australia? I understand that one water bomber is dedicated to the South-East and is partially paid for by the forestry industry, two are dedicated to Adelaide (and, in particular, the Mount Lofty Ranges), leaving one available for the rest of the state, which was sent to the South-East on 11 January despite an existing fire on the Eyre Peninsula and a severe fire danger warning. Victoria, I understand, has 14 water bombers to cover a smaller area.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Emergency Services): I do not know whether the member for Flinders understands what an embarrassment for the previous government her questions are. Do we not have enough resources in terms of aerial firefighters? Well, we have more than doubled the resources. I would like the member for Flinders to go back and show me when once in the entire history of the previous government—the Brown and Olsen governments—she ever raised an issue with the aerial firefighting capacity. Under her Liberals half as much is enough. Under us twice as much is not enough. What utter lack of standards or double standards, or whatever you want to call it.

The truth is, and let me put this on the record: the most important resource provided in this state for fighting fires are the 17 000 volunteers in the Country Fire Service who, under this government, have also received dramatically increased resources.

The Hon. D.C. Kotz: Rubbish!

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Rubbish? These people cannot count. They simply cannot count.

STAMP DUTY FOR BUSH FIRE AFFECTED 9 February 2005

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Treasurer advise the house whether the exemption from stamp duty on the extension of mortgages and replacement vehicles for Eyre Peninsula fire victims will extend to the purchase of replacement houses, and will the stamp duty exemption be affected by the receipt of the \$10 000 funding provided by the state government? One of my constituents, whose home and fences were completely destroyed, has been advised that, because he received \$10 000 immediately after the devastating Black Tuesday fires, he is ineligible for stamp duty relief on a home he needs to purchase.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY (Treasurer): As has been acknowledged on both sides of the house, this matter has been handled in a bipartisan manner, not to score political points. I will— *The Hon. W.A. Matthew interjecting:*

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bright is out of order.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I was on leave during those tragic fires and was not acting in my capacity as Treasurer during that period, so I am not fully briefed on everything that occurred at the time as I was not the person making those decisions. I will immediately seek advice from my department on that matter. As all members know, as Treasurer I have very widespread and significant ex gratia powers which can be used. I will look at this matter immediately so I can have the details, and we will look at it within the hour.

Mrs PENFOLD: I have a supplementary question. Will the Treasurer advise whether exemptions from other state fees on that same house could be looked at the same time, namely, the development plan and the building rules and the construction industry?

Mrs Geraghty interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Torrens does not need to give assistance to the Treasurer.

The Hon. K.O. FOLEY: I did not hear the full details of the member's question. I will have a look at it. The government responded immediately with a \$6 million package, the substance of which was quite significant. I do not think there has been any complaint from members opposite about the quantum that was immediately agreed to by the Premier and the then acting treasurer. Right through this terrible tragedy, the government has acted swiftly and with compassion, generosity, care and concern for each and every individual affected by these tragic fires. I do not have the answer to the specific details of the member's questions, partly because I was not on duty at the time and, secondly, because of the import of the question, I do not want to give an answer which is anything but completely accurate, and I cannot do that until I have the details in front of me.

COMPUTERS FOR BUSH FIRE VICTIMS **9 February 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Administrative Services advise the house whether free computers could be made available to the victims of the Eyre Peninsula bushfires from the Smart State PC Donation program?
The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Why don't you just come and talk to us?

Mrs PENFOLD: The Smart State PC Donation program guidelines exclude individuals. Given the extraordinary circumstances, it would be appreciated if they could be waived in this instance. I have been contacted by constituents who lost everything, including valuable business records and school work, and it is vital to the rebuilding of homes and farms that records are accurately maintained. However, without computers this effort is almost impossible.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Administrative Services): As the Deputy Premier has already answered, this government has taken swift action to help rebuild after this tragic event. A number of speakers on both sides of the house, including the member for Flinders, made a very eloquent contribution at the appropriate time, and we certainly went out of our way to acknowledge the great role that she played as local member. As the Deputy Premier has said, if there are any worthwhile suggestions that we can build on to assist people in rebuilding their lives, we would want to look at that. Just as the Deputy Premier said, I ask the honourable member to present these details to me and I will undertake to have a good look at them.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Administrative Services): I seek leave to make a brief ministerial statement.
Leave granted.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT: In regard to the question asked by the member for Flinders, my department has just advised me that, upon application, DAIS will provide a PC from its available stocks for anyone who was fire-affected. In relation to the particular inquiry to DAIS by the member for Flinders, I have also been advised that DAIS is in the process of supplying a PC to that person.

BUSHFIRE CONDOLENCE MOTION **9th February 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Like many others, I have been watching with horror as the pictures of the devastation of the Asian tsunami were beamed into our living rooms. Natural and man-made disasters seem to be everywhere, and I thought how fortunate we were to live where we do, on lovely Eyre Peninsula in peaceful South Australia. I still think that we are very fortunate, but I grieve terribly for the lives that have been lost in what, as a local member of parliament, I have always called my patch. These were my people from my families, and I have not been able to protect them. Those who I did not know personally members of my staff did or, at least, members of their families and friends. The contact with my office was immediate, continuous and very emotional starting with devastated people in tears who had driven through the flames to escape the inferno around them, expecting to have lost everything. I do not expect that the people and their tears and their stories will stop quickly. Everyone has been affected in some way, and it will only be the tremendous support from within and outside the region that will help to pull us through what has been an awful time for everyone, but particularly for those who lost family members.

As the sky darkened with thick, black smoke, as the strong, hot northerly wind blew, and as the smell pervaded our building, my staff went up to Winter's Hill to see how bad it was. I could not go. I stayed behind, fearful that this time we would not be as fortunate as we had been with the Tulka fires. I did not want to see and I did not know that already lives had been lost. But for the firefighters and some fortunate wind changes, bravery, some quick thinking, and a considerable amount of luck, it could easily have been hundreds more. By the end of the day the toll was nine—nine too many.

My heartfelt sympathy and that of my family and my staff, and I am sure of all the members of this house, goes to

all of you who have lost those you loved. To the family, wife Judy, children Mark, Kate and Lisa, and friends of Neil Richardson, 'Pee-Wee', farmer from 'Rocklea', Cockaleechee, who was fighting the fire from the back of his farm ute—as he would have done many times before—our thoughts are with you. The description of Neil as a top bloke fitted well. He was a gifted footballer who had played league for Sturt and for the Ramblers team in the winter; he was also a cricketer, spin bowler and batsman in the summer. Like most farmers, he had a great love of the land he farmed, his family and his community. I am glad that he was able to see his daughter wed only days before. A country wedding is a great time for family and friends to get together and celebrate the continuity of the generations.

To the family, wife Paula and daughter Chloe, and friends of Trent 'Wig' Murnane, a young man who already had a successful agricultural spraying and clay spreading business that was employing others, a CFS volunteer of more than 10 years, a footballer and coach from the small community of Cummins, our thoughts are with you also. Trent was a young man with a young family who should have had their lives ahead of them. I know that family and friends will support those he left behind as only people who live in such a wonderful close community can.

To the family, mum and dad Natalie and Darren, and friends of Star and Jack Borlase and their devoted grandmother Judith Griffith, whose husband Wayne was seriously injured, our thoughts are also with you. The Borlase family has had more than its share of grief with highly respected farmer, Vietnam veteran and much loved grandfather John Borlase having died only recently. Once more, the community has closed in around the Borlase family as they start their lives again. Natalie summed it up saying, 'You are just numb: you don't even know where to start. You have to rebuild but you have to do it without your kids and your mum.' They also wait as Natalie's dad recovers from his ordeal.

To the family, dad Damian and friends of Zoe and Graham and their loving mum Jody Russell-Kay, we grieve with you. I know that Damian is being supported by his mum and some close friends who love him dearly and who will gradually help him heal the heart that, as he put it, 'was ripped out and stomped on.' Words cannot describe the feeling when young people cannot complete their life's journey. Every mother, father, grandfather, grandmother, anyone who loves anyone, has the feeling that it could have been us and feels some of the pain that Damian, his family and friends are feeling.

To the family, husband Trevor and children Karl and Linda, and friends of an exceptional and talented scientist, naturalist and artist Helen Castle, along with the many others, we are grieving with you also. I had seen Helen down at the corner shop and said hello only a few days before the fire. Several times I had called in to see Trevor and Helen's Karlinda Shell Museum at their home in North Shields but it was always closed. If I had thought about it probably the pleasant days that I chose to visit would have been the best days for diving and it was no wonder that they were not there. Now I will not get the chance to know this intelligent, caring woman better or see the unique collection of more than 10 000 shells. Her loss is a great loss for her family, her friends and the community but it is also a huge loss for all the young people whom she will not be able to teach now that her life has been cut short. People with her gifts and talents and her enthusiasm are out of the ordinary in any profession and are particularly valuable when they are teachers. It is with pleasure that I take up family friend Mr John Ison's excellent idea for an academic prize fund named in her honour, and have started the ball rolling with \$1 000 to the Helen Castle Memorial Prize Fund.

Late on Tuesday night after the worst of the fire was over and my husband Geoff and I had done what we could for those who had been affected, settled in our billets and checked that family members at Tumbay Bay were all safe, I made one last phone call. At that point there was a fear that 10 people had been killed, but I had been told that the toll could go to 12 and I could not go to bed not knowing. It was a great relief to be told that the toll was confirmed at nine and there were not expected to be any more. It is my great hope that that toll will remain at nine, as I am well aware of the pressure and emotional turmoil that is still out there and will remain for years to come.

For those who read this and feel that pressure or know someone who may be in a position where the pressure is getting too great, please reach out. Go and speak to someone, pick up the phone, talk. Those who love you cannot help if they do not know, and if you do not want them to know then please ring a hospital where professional counsellors are available or ring your rural councillor, your church or friends or even my office. I urge you to do something. Grief is natural and, as with all things, the worst of it will pass given time. We share your grief and we will remember.

I quote the special tribute that renowned South Australian Max Fatchen penned entitled 'Strong and Proud' that he has given me permission to read. It is as follows:

The paddocks charred, the homes destroyed and heartbreaks human toll
And yet among the tragedy this countryside has soul
While those of us now safe and sound must rally to its need
There are no finer folk around than Eyre Peninsula's breed
It's very hard to paint in words the terror of the blaze
By coastline with a shining sea, the joy of holidays
And when the mad inferno came, it's not for one to preach
On smoke-filled air, the valiant fight, the terror on the beach. . .
It's just to say we try to share, the feeling and the loss
To say we want to help you bear the anguish of your cross
And when the time for action comes and when the words are done
To let you know our feelings that we stand with you as one
I know my Eyre Peninsula friends who helped me understand
The coast they fish, the farms they till and love of this hard land
I've come away with yarns of drought and when the crops were thin
The creed of Eyre Peninsula is never giving in
To those who fought so gallantly, for fire's a raging brute
Amid our tears, to volunteers, I have this brave salute
And draw together as we must with hopeful word and deed
And let them know we value them, this Eyre Peninsula breed.

The speed and ferocity of this fire is scarcely understood even by those who were adjacent to the region but were unaffected. There has probably not been a fire of this intensity in South Australian modern history. The fire was approximately double the intensity of Ash Wednesday's fire in the Adelaide Hills. A farmer at Edillilie had an engine that melted in the heat with the molten steel running along the ground. I have been told that the temperature must exceed 1000 degrees Celsius for that to happen. Aluminium boats and appliances melted—a temperature of 800 degrees Celsius is needed for that. The fire was reckoned to be travelling about 80 or so kilometres an hour. One of the many problems faced by the firefighters was that the fire did not move in a straight line: the wind veered from north to west to south intermittently. One man was reported to have two fire fronts approaching his house from opposite directions simultaneously.

The geography of the area covered by the fire consists of steep hills and deep gullies—not unlike the Adelaide Hills. Roads through this area are dirt surfaces with many bends and turns and it is a test of careful driving at the best of times. Residents fleeing the fire were hampered first of all by the roads themselves and by the smoke that cut visibility to less than a metre for some considerable time and then by the fire overtaking them. Listening to the personal stories makes one wonder that the death toll was only nine. The CFS firefighters were unstinting in their efforts to save property—many of them would have known that their own homes, sheds, machinery, stock and fences were being destroyed yet the teams stayed together doing what they could where they could. There are miraculous stories of buildings and properties that were saved; indeed, the White Flat District Hall is just one of the buildings that was saved from the inferno. The firefighters did not know where the members of their family were nor did their families know where the volunteer firefighters were. No-one knew who was safe or who may have been injured since the Port Lincoln hospital reportedly treated more than 100 people that day.

When news of deaths began to filter through, there were many hours of agony until family and friends could speak together. In my own office our trainee waited in agony knowing that her father was one of those out fighting the fire. Despite this, the volunteers did not leave their units but continued to battle the fire where they were needed. These crews know this region well and all were aware that a wrong decision, putting them in the wrong place at the wrong time, could mean their lives.

Firefighters are trained to cope when trapped in fire, but all that knowledge could not save the two men who died. The whole state owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the volunteer men and women who put their lives on the line to protect our communities. Volunteer crews from around Eyre Peninsula and other regions of the state willingly came to assist to relieve the men (some of whom had been on duty for more than 24 hours); to share the burden and responsibility; and, together, to contain the fire and extinguish hot spots on succeeding days. Volunteers come from all walks of life. Indeed, many of the firefighters were locals who answered the call to arms with their utilities and firefighting units. Their assistance also is immeasurable.

I have mentioned the CFS. I must also mention the Metropolitan Fire Service crews from Port Lincoln and Whyalla. The MFS does not usually go outside urban boundaries, but on this occasion they added their expertise to the fight. State Emergency Service volunteers, St John Ambulance volunteers and the SA Ambulance were active throughout the emergency. Again, personnel came from far afield to give much-needed support in the days after Black Tuesday. Only a skeleton operation and management staff remained at police headquarters in Port Lincoln

while police officers manned road blocks, provided communication backup and dealt with the distraught people who were unable to access their properties—and certainly they saved some lives.

Telephone lines were damaged, so telephones were out. The fires occurred in an area where black spots make mobile phones unworkable, and in many cases the smoke and flames affected transmitter towers. Other radio connections were similarly erratic. There is no reticulated water throughout most of the area devastated by the fires and, with the major pipelines bursting in the heat, even those people expecting to be able to use reticulated water could not do so. One couple saved their home by filling buckets of water from their rainwater tanks and throwing the water over the side of the house nearest the fire front. The garage and office, both only a few feet from the house, burnt down.

Many of the personal stories coming out of the fire have been reported in the media. One of the recurring themes is the fickleness of the fire that allows for no explanation as to why homes were burnt but sheds nearby were not, while it was the reverse situation on other properties. In other instances, everything was razed. A fence burnt but the gate posts and gates were left untouched and standing.

Wildlife was baked. Snakes, lizards and birds could be picked up as if they were carved from wood. Then there is the story of two horses watched by their owners from the protection of a shed while the terrified animals were lost in flames more than 30 metres high. These two horses survived and are okay.

Some of the most poignant stories come from people sifting and searching through the ash and debris for something—anything—that survived: some memories, some link with the past, some tangible evidence of their family history. A father had given his late wife's ring to his son to be kept for his grand-daughter when she is older. Nothing remained of the home. Already traumatised, the son and his wife scraped through the ash heap, very aware of the father's sorrow and feeling of deep loss. Amongst the mess, they came across the mother's ring—intact and untouched in its small damaged box. It is the only thing they have.

The Australian sense of humour will get some people through. A farmer was sitting on the ground in the middle of his burnt-out farm—no stubble or grass, no trees, no fences, no stock, no sheds, no house. A friend phoned and asked what he was doing. 'Smoking a cigarette,' was his reply. 'Just don't set fire to anything,' was the only comment his friend could make, but it brought a hearty laugh.

The public's response to the disaster has been enormous. Much has been willingly and promptly given—a home, caravans, vehicles, hay for stock. Small and large donations all testify to the compassion in our community, the generosity and the Australian ethos to help a mate when he is down. Much of this has been reported in the media. I personally thank the many people in Port Lincoln—some from churches and some not—who have worked tirelessly with the Salvation Army in sorting and distributing goods and food. Red Cross members have contributed greatly. Friends and community members have rolled up their sleeves and assisted in all manner of ways. Each person who has given something or done something has helped towards those affected by the fire getting back to living and coping with the tragedy. The speed of the response from the state and federal governments was appreciated. Now we concentrate on the future while looking for the lessons to be learned—the things that can be done better.

I think perhaps I have said enough, but there is just one more thing. I urge our young people to consider joining one of our voluntary emergency services. Our ambulance services across the region are desperate for more people, as are the CFS and the SES. We cannot do without them in the regions. I support the motion.