



LOWER EYRE PENINSULA FIRES
27 September 2001

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I move:

That this House commends all people involved in the fighting and in the aftermath of the Lower Eyre Peninsula fires.

The fires on southern Eyre Peninsula have been a grim reminder to all of us of the perennial dangers posed by bushfires and the tragic situations they can bring about. It was very late on Friday night after checking that everyone was safe, housed and fed that I finally sat down and saw the news and photos of the towering infernos that engulfed the small town of Tulka. It was surprising to me that we did not have any deaths; these were probably avoided only by the close proximity of the sea. On the other hand, it has been wonderful to see the tremendous effort put in by so many volunteers, service clubs, departmental personnel, businesses, the fishing industry and just ordinary citizens.

The cooperation and community spirit that has been evident during this trying time has been inspirational. Spontaneous acts of generosity have been common, with a local school donating the food from a barbecue they had intended to have on the Friday night, and a young man from Adelaide organising for toys to be collected and given to the young people of Tulka. Unsolicited boxes, bags, trays of food and goods were delivered to check points and charities. In addition, many thousands of dollars have been given and distributed to those in need.

Many people worked around the clock at the height of the fire and subsequently worked long shifts to repair plant and equipment, supply food, man fire trucks and do the many unseen jobs that were necessary. I appreciate that at times it took an heroic effort just to maintain utilities such as water and electricity, especially when the fire was at its fiercest. Power lines fell and cut power to the pumps for Eyre Peninsula's main water supply. The massive pipes from the basin broke apart in the heat and had to be reconnected. The level of difficulty was far greater than any of us who were not directly involved could ever have imagined.

That there was not a major disruption to the lives of the people of Port Lincoln can be directly attributed to the work done by the ETSA Utilities, SA Water, CFS and MFS service personnel who worked above and beyond the call of duty. Then there were those who donated their time and that of their employees and often their equipment, trucks, bulldozers and even aeroplanes to the effort. I acknowledge with pride the people from across Australia and the local community and their generous response and support, especially their compassionate efforts in assisting Tulka residents to come to terms with the loss of their homes and possessions. I commend the motion.