



**Victoria Bushfire Condolences
February 17 2009**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I rise to support this condolence motion on the devastating fires in Victoria with a heavy heart. The people in my electorate understand well the anguish of the people who have been affected by these most terrible fires. We grieved for the nine too many lives that were lost in the Wangary fire, and it is hard to comprehend the number of lives lost in these.

My heartfelt sympathy and that of the people in the electorate of Flinders—and, I am sure, of all South Australians—goes out to everyone affected. The stories and the tears will remain always, and it will be a long time before many are able to deal with their losses adequately enough to even speak of them. The loss of lives, of property, of loved possessions, of pets, farm and native animals, of just a familiar environment and the feeling of security this brings, is devastating.

I thank all emergency services personnel, the thousands of others who have helped save lives and property, and all those who are helping now and who will help in the future. The fantastic community response, when people see others in need, is one of the few positives that come out of these awful events. A colleague who had been helping to organise hay sent me an email yesterday to say that no more was needed at present because the response had been overwhelming.

I know that across the country goods are being sent and money is being raised. A hat was passed around the aeroplane as I went home on the Rex flight last Thursday, and a firey came into my office on Friday with a collection boot. Invitations are coming in to attend fundraising events from all across Eyre Peninsula, where people are themselves suffering hardship from years of drought and loss of jobs, often caused by the current world economic downturn. However, wherever they can, people are helping those they perceive to be worse off than they are. I commend them for their wonderful community spirit and generosity.

I can say no more that will not be said by others, but I want to put on the record how deeply we feel about this disaster. I end with a request that we do more to protect ourselves and our communities from fire right now and into the future and that we do not forget these people after the initial moment has passed, as for many an often lifetime struggle is only just beginning. I commend the motion.