

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2012

### EMERGENCY SERVICES FUNDING

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:00):** I support this motion by the member for Schubert which condemns the state government for failing to provide adequate funding to the CFS and SES and wants the Auditor-General instructed to report on the collection and expenditure of the emergency services levy.

I also am a member of the CFS, and there are many members in our area. Sadly, a lot of the work they do is not fighting fires. Mind you, when they are called out to fight fires, they are ready, willing and able to go out. A lot of the work, being on the Dukes Highway at Coomandook, is highway crashes. This can cause the members to be out all night, and it might be operating a road block so that traffic can be put around a scene or, if there has been a fatality in a road smash, they have to assist in blocking the road completely.

A lot of the time—and I do not think this should have to be done by our volunteers—they are out there directing traffic. So, there are not enough resources out there so that we have the appropriate numbers of police to direct the traffic around these scenes. What we have—and it has happened—is fatalities, perhaps someone is dead in a vehicle or has been knocked off a pushbike. There was a very tragic case near Coonalpyn in recent times.

The first people on the scene are usually members of the CFS; a lot of them are farmers. They have to deal with the horrors of the initial accident. They have to manage that, position their trucks at each end of the scene on a major highway, and they are getting instructions from further afield that they have to manage the traffic risk. To me, this is taking advantage of volunteers. The police should be dispatched immediately so that this can be managed in the appropriate way. I note that with some of these incidents, if they are extended incidents and the roads have to be closed for an extended period due to fatality or major incident, major crash have to come down from Adelaide to investigate—and that is fair enough, I appreciate that. However, next thing, not only do you have the CFS volunteers involved but also the department of transport staff or contractors. I think we need to be fairer to our Country Fire Service volunteers. They need more support, especially in these incidents.

It is not just these things they have to do; as part of these highway accidents, a lot of these times they have to be instant social workers. I have spoken in this place before about one of my friends who has had to sit on top of an overturned truck that has been involved in a bad accident. I believe it was a fatal accident. The truck driver

could not get out. He was fine as long as they could get him out; he was not under threat of death, I believe. This truck was tipped over and my friend just had to sit on top of the upturned truck and talk him through it. There are a lot of events like this that people do not realise our volunteers have to deal with.

Sometimes the fires are the simple ones. With scrub fires, you generally wait outside the event and make sure that you can hit it when it gets to the clear country. I want to reiterate that our Country Fire Service crews right around the state have to deal with issues like road trauma and any kind of fire—bushfire, house fire, industrial fire. They get the appropriate training. You could argue that they need to have more training because there is never enough training.

I note in relation to the Coonalpyn CFS, they are trying to move stations. There are some issues down there with some council land. But we have seen so many issues just with CFS stations trying to get upgraded so they can fit in the new style trucks which are bigger and better than what the CFS has had in the past. We see the issue at Stirling where the government will not give the appropriate funding for a brigade that is right in the Hills, right in the red zone as far as bushfire protection goes, and they cannot get the appropriate funding to get this facility upgraded to the appropriate level. The government will come up with all sorts of excuses that they cannot provide this funding.

We saw with the recent incident at Wingfield that Stirling was called in to back up a metropolitan fire service brigade and run down to the city to be parked there in place of the metropolitan service that had rushed down to fight this other major fire. I commend the Metropolitan Fire Service for what it does, but these are paid people and the CFS are volunteers who take up their own time. I commend their bosses for giving them the time. It is a cost to the community, but the community, business and employers understand the community obligation and that it is for the greater good.

On this side of the house we want to see the appropriate level of funding go to the Country Fire Service so it can have the right equipment: the trucks, the tankers and the protective clothing (the helmets and the gloves) to make sure it can carry out this vital work. If the government had to pay for the hours that these volunteers in the CFS and the SES (State Emergency Service) put in there is no way it would be budgeted for—no way.

I know about the great work of the SES and the CFS on roads in the community. Recently they were involved in a bad accident right on the end of the Swanport Bridge at Murray Bridge. A car went under a truck and the truck went over the side and landed on a big granite rock, so that would have been one hell of a ride for the truck driver. Luckily, he got out; sadly, the car driver was killed instantly. Major work was required and the road was closed for a significant time.

In fact, after that incident they kept the road open overnight but the next day (when they had to pick the truck up and place it back on the road) they closed the freeway, so B-doubles were trying to shuttle through the old bridge in Murray Bridge and because B-doubles cannot go across the old bridge they have to be unhooked, towed through the town, go back and get the second trailer and be rehooked up. I was at a community function there and it was quite an interesting scenario to watch what these guys had to do.

I would like to acknowledge that the work of the CFS and the SES is vital for the state and for communities. It gives the volunteers involved a great sense of ownership and a great sense that they are doing something for their communities. They need to be recognised and acknowledged for what they do and they need to be supplied with appropriate equipment such as appropriate trucks. Moore Engineering at Murray Bridge makes very good trucks which, sadly, a lot of the time get overlooked for second-rate trucks built interstate, and I do not say that lightly.

**The Hon. R.B. Such:** It's shameful.

**Mr PEDERICK:** Absolutely. They get built interstate and then they come over here and they have to be repaired—basically completely rebuilt. On the West Coast a couple of years ago the new Meningie truck had to go into Moore Engineering and virtually be completely rebuilt. It is just atrocious, because we have a government which only looks at the B-grade option when they could have a better option—and, yes, it may cost a little more—but you always know you will get a good unit out of Moore Engineering. They are doing work out of Western Australia: Western Australian mine vehicles and emergency vehicles get ordered through Moore Engineering. The government should take more notice of local contractors who can supply world-class emergency vehicles.

I commend the motion by the member for Schubert; it is a great motion. I acknowledge his support for the CFS and the SES, and I hope the motion makes speedy passage through the house.