



Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES (NATURAL DISASTERS COMMITTEE) (NO 2) AMENDMENT
BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
2013-02-07

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:15): I certainly support the member for Davenport and his work in introducing this bill. Iain Evans introduced a bill regarding the establishment of a bushfire committee and gave evidence, as the member for Davenport, to the parliament's Natural Resources Committee and, as indicated, it became obvious that there was wider support for a broader committee of natural disasters. I note that the Natural Resources Committee has now released its report, which states:

The committee strongly supports Iain Evans' call for a standing committee on bushfires, recommending that it may be opportunistically broadened to consider all natural disasters, including bushfires, floods, earthquakes, riverbank collapse, tsunamis, extreme weather events, hazardous material and pollution emergencies, pest plagues and agricultural diseases.

Obviously a broad range of events can be covered by this. I note the mention of riverbank collapse, of which there were many throughout my electorate during the drought preceding September 2010, where we saw pump sheds and cars disappear into the river at Sturt Reserve (I think three went in and only one came out).

Some massive impositions were forced onto marinas and property owners. Power supply infrastructure went into the river, and it has been terrible for many residents along the river. It also mentions agricultural disasters. Agriculture is a major contributor of income to this state, so that needs to be taken into account. There are earthquakes and it talks about tsunamis. Bushfires were the genesis of the proposal for this committee, and they are something this state suffers continuously. I note that we are coming up to the 30th anniversary of Ash Wednesday, and that was a terrible day for this state. On that day many lives were lost, along with stock, properties and many families' dreams, but it continues to happen.

With my farming property only seven years ago we had a lightning strike and a fire was fanned across the highway. We had aerial bombers coming down the highway bombing transport and other road users as they were trying to put out the fire. It came across into our tree line and into our property. With our private unit, other private units and the CFS we managed to get it under control. Being a member of the CFS I thank the other CFS people who came from as far away as Lucindale. I remember the next morning talking to the commander who was on site at the time, and he had come up from his own property at Lucindale to help someone else. I acknowledge their efforts.

This happens continuously and most recently I was over visiting the member for Finnis on Kangaroo Island and there were many lightning strikes and our property again was on fire. Thankfully it was only a small fire. Neighbours were quickly on the scene and took the bulk of the action, because the CFS was fighting a multitude of fires in the area at the time. There were at least 100 fires between the Mallee/Upper South-East and the Lower South-East that day, most from lightning strikes. Sadly, as the member for MacKillop indicated, there are idiots who seem to have an innate desire to go around and light fires. It just beggars belief why anyone would do that when you see the carnage or if you have witnessed stock losses, fencing losses and property losses that can happen through fire.

Recently, over 300 hectares of fire damage was caused in the Finnis area—farming land, vineyards, dripper lines, posts. There was massive damage to the area in my electorate, and if it was not for the efforts of the CFS and landowners these fires could be a lot worse. I note, with the member for Davenport initiating this back in 2011, as well as discussion around bushfires—and note his electorate—that when you travel around the Adelaide Hills there are so many spots where there is only one way in and one way out. Sadly, unless we get a lot smarter, as indicated on the front page of *The Advertiser* in the last couple of years, there could be 300 deaths from a major bushfire.

As the member for MacKillop indicated, we do give a mixed message to people: it is stay or go. People really need to be sure, if they are going to stay, that they can manage the situation, because you could have a fireball go right over the top and it might be ember attack that gets your property going. People really need to be sure that they are prepared to stay, and those decisions need to be made very early in the piece. If you leave it to the last minute, as we have seen in fires across the nation recently, sadly, people have lost their lives in trying to flee the flames.

In talking about Adelaide Hills fires, I note today that my family recently purchased an interest in an Adelaide Hills property. However, before doing that, I took particular notice that there were two ways out and there was a refuge if it really hit the fan, so to speak. I have always said to my family, no matter where it happened, 'Just leave; insurance will do the rest.' I can understand people wanting to save homes, but you can always rebuild.

I certainly congratulate the member for Davenport on putting this motion in place to get this committee elected across the parliament and to establish this natural disasters committee. I think we still have a lot to learn about fire and disaster management. As time goes on, I think we need to have things in place, especially this committee. It is a fantastic opportunity to have something like this in place so that inquiries can be made at the top level in this state as to what goes on in the management of these things. Too often we see so-called controlled burns that get out of control. A lot of these happen with the environment department.

Mr Pengilly: Most of them.

Mr PEDERICK: 'Most of them,' says the member for Finnis. There needs to be a lot more planning. I am appalled some days when you see so-called controlled burns take off in thousands of hectares of parks—like those over near the Gawler Ranges or, in recent years, in the Messent Conservation Park down at Keith and other areas. I visited Ngarkat Conservation Park in my electorate the other day, which has suffered major areas of burnout. I think that the environment department are going too hard with their so-called controlled burns and upsetting the natural habitat so much that we are not getting good growth back.

In my closing remarks I will comment on the recent Mid North fires, which the member for Stuart so rightly put on the record yesterday, where a fire seemed to rekindle after an event in November, I believe, and burnt out a huge tract of farmland as well as a huge part of the forest. I think committees like this one could fully investigate what happened there, why there are not enough resources for firefighting up there and why FireKing appliances are not permanently in place to make sure that these fires can be managed. I certainly endorse this move by the member for Davenport and hope that the parliament sees sense and endorses it as well.

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