

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2015

Sampson Flat and Tantanoola Bushfires

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:45): Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a contribution to your motion as the member for Florey regarding the efforts of the emergency services staff and volunteers in relation to the Sampson Flat and Tantanoola fires. We have certainly seen the best of what can happen in these situations. I think some very valiant efforts were made by our own CFS and other volunteer agencies with assistance from Victoria and New South Wales. It just goes to show that when you throw the right resources at a situation—this was indeed a very touchy situation—you can get the appropriate outcome.

What I was most pleased to see in response to this fire was that many firefighting planes were operational, and viewing platforms and helicopters were also involved in the fighting of this fire. It is a stark contrast to what happened with the Cherryville blaze. I have heard all the excuses why they were not deployed at Cherryville, and I still firmly believe that they were just excuses. I, like all CFS volunteers, understand that the ground forces need to get in there, but there are certain parts of the landscape that ground forces cannot get to and, if you hit it with a water bomber, you can get a far better outcome in a much shorter time.

I want to praise the efforts of the whole CFS in this state, New South Wales and Victoria for their support, the Salvation Army in helping feed people during this process, and all the other volunteers that got on board. Sadly, we did lose some homes but we did not lose any lives, and I think that just shows how, under the current firefighting and emergency services regime, things do work. They do not need to change; everyone operates together and we get the right outcome.

I take note of the member for Kavel's comment that if you do leave your home you may not be able to get back to it. I can understand the reasons for that, but some people who stayed with their homes did save them while homes around them burnt down because resources were not able to get there to save them. That is always the call of the occupant, and certainly some people, for health reasons or age or inability, should not stay anyway. It is something that we will need to look at further because it is obvious that some people can vent their frustration when they are not allowed back into their property.

I heap praise on all the people involved in fighting these fires and other fires around the state. It has been a fact of life in Australia for hundreds of years, thousands of years, that fire is a part of the landscape, and I too was offended by the leader of the Greens relating it to climate change. He needs to go outside and look at the real world.

I understand that we need to be mindful of the time as we have other matters to deal with today. However, in closing, I will just mention that the members for Mount Gambier, MacKillop, Mitchell, Finniss, and possibly others, would have liked to have spoken on the motion but we have other matters to attend to, so I commend the motion to the house.