

Debate over fines heats up

By **Chanelle Leslie**

CERTAIN fines from Natural Resource Management boards may be sidestepped if a new bill passes State Parliament.

Independent MLC Ann Bressington last week introduced a Fire and Emergency Services (Fire Risk Assessments) Amendment Bill which would empower landholders to clear vegetation deemed necessary by NRM authorities without the risk of a non-compliance fine.

"Farmers and landholders were being told not to clear dead trees et cetera, because it was claimed by NRM officers to be habitat with non compliance fines being threatened," she said.

"Of course this was unacceptable given the high fire risk that SA experiences every summer.

"This Bill gives absolute over-riding

authority to the Country Fire Service, as it should be."

If the Bill passes both houses, landholders will be able to request a fire risk assessment from the CFS or Metropolitan Fire Service outside of high fire risk periods, and clear their properties according to the assessment.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said the Liberal party was yet to decide its position on the bill.

"There's certainly room for education around what people can and can't do," he said.

"It is a balancing act between what's appropriate to leave in terms of vegetation and what people should be able to do."

The CFS was contacted for comment but declined, instead saying the Government was still considering its response to the bill.