



# Fair-go for firies

By **Claire Campbell**

COUNTRY Fire Service (CFS) firefighters have been in our thoughts recently as they fought tirelessly to protect lives and homes at Rockleigh and Eden Valley, and while that memory is still fresh there have reigniting calls for better cancer compensation for volunteers.

The CFS Volunteers Association and volunteer firefighters fronted the media yesterday in Tea Tree Gully demanding equal treatment for CFS and Metropolitan Fire Service firefighters.

In a well-timed political move, the State Liberals, Greens and Family First parties have joined forces and committed to compensation for all CFS volunteers, regardless of the cost or how often volunteers work.

State Liberal Leader Steven Marshall said CFS volunteers worked hard and needed to be supported.

"It's a fundamental issue of equality," he said.

"CFS are putting their lives on the line every summer and we need to back them."

While the Opposition leader would not say how much the additional compensation would cost, he promised to put all preliminary advice and costings on the table in the lead up to the election.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick supported Mr Marshall

in his push for cancer compensation equality.

"CFS volunteers face the same dangers and health risks as MFS members in their efforts to protect communities," he said.

"Equality throughout the system is what is needed and I am extremely pleased the State Liberals are getting behind the CFS."

For CFS volunteers it's not just about cancer compensation.

Tea Tree Gully CFS volunteer Jim Sandford said all he wanted was to be treated fairly.

"All volunteers are concerned that they're not being treated equally," he said.

"It's a real disincentive to volunteering.

"For us older people, I'd certainly be concerned if I contracted something."

Country Fire Service Volunteers Association executive director Sonia St Alban said she welcomed the announcements.

"Volunteers appreciate support of all parties that are behind them," she said.

"We look after the State, they (the Government) need to look after us."

At the moment CFS firefighters must be exposed to 35 hazardous fires per year as part of the eligibility for cancer compensation.

Metropolitan Fire Service personnel do not need to prove any cancer is work-related to be covered for brain, kidney, breast, bladder,

testicular, prostate, ureter, colorectal and oesophageal cancers and multiple myeloma, leukaemia and non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

While the fires in Rockleigh and Eden Valley may not have been considered "hazardous," Ms St Alban said bushfire smoke could be damaging, yet

it's not just fires to which the CFS respond.

"CFS is a multi-facet agency and we respond to all kinds of incidents, not just fires," she said.

The State Government said it would cost an extra \$23 million per year to compensate more than 13 thousand South Australian CFS firefighters.



**Speaking up:** Greens member Tammy Franks, State Liberal Leader Steven Marshall and Family First member Robert Brokenshire at yesterday's press conference on cancer compensation for CFS volunteers.