

**House of Assembly
2 December 2009**

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE: EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. P.L. White:

That the 69th report of the Economic and Finance Committee, entitled Emergency Services Levy 2009-10, be noted.

(Continued from 28 October 2009. Page 4498.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:23): I also want to acknowledge the report of the Economic and Finance Committee with respect to the emergency services levy. I wish to add my comments about the upgrades that have been possible with respect to emergency services, especially coming from a farming area, as I do, which is an area covered by the CFS. Recently, my own brigade of Coomandook has upgraded its old truck to a new truck. In a sense, it was a sad day, because the old fire truck was only about 20 years old. It still had a 3,000 litre tank and was in very good order. I cannot remember how many kilometres it had done, but it would have made a very good unit for anyone who purchased it. I do not know whether it is being used somewhere else in the CFS ranks. The beauty of it was that you could jump on the back from the rear of the vehicle but, obviously, because of occupational health and safety concerns—

Mr Pengilly: We used to do that on farm utes.

Mr PEDERICK: —yes—the trucks are entered from the side. Certainly, the new trucks are an upgrade. The whole crew can fit in the dual cab style cabin, and there is even a few minutes' supply of oxygen. I just hope I am not in the truck when it hits the fan: you are really in strife if you have to use that. One extremely important priority for the survival of firefighters when conditions are extreme is protecting the firefighters in the cab, and there are sprinklers mounted around the cab and also fire resistant curtains that can be brought down when there is a burn-over. I note that it is compulsory for every CFS volunteer to participate in a burn-over drill, no matter what piece of equipment they have, so that everyone knows how to survive in a very bad bushfire.

Certainly, these upgrades are far better than the old fire truck. Essentially, all we had was a fire blanket in the cab. If someone was caught in the cab in a bad fire they would have to get underneath it with whomever else was in the cab and try to survive. Certainly, the upgrades have been well received and we have seen improvements. I also note that a water tanker for the group has recently been stationed at my local brigade at Coomandook, so that gives us added fire protection in the Upper South-East and the Mallee.

You have to be involved in a big fire operation like the one on Kangaroo Island (in the electorate of the member for Finnis) a couple of years ago to realise how much emergency services do for this state and this country. There were many fire units from all over South Australia on the island and also trucks from Victoria and New South Wales. This has also happened with other big firefighting incidents elsewhere in South Australia, where trucks from the Eastern States have come over to assist our firefighters. I note that our firefighters have been only too keen when given the call to go to the east to assist in major incidents.

I certainly endorse this motion acknowledging the emergency services levy. It has upgraded things such as communications in fire trucks. I do not think there could be a worse position in a fire truck than to be the radio operator and have three radios barking at you in extreme situations.

Mr Pengilly: Turn two off!

Mr PEDERICK: Yes. It can be quite distracting. Obviously, communication is the key. There are many people trying to talk to each other, and there can be a lot of activity taking place— aerial bombers saving critical places such as infrastructure, homes, shedding, and so on. It is all happening. As I said, it can be confusing, but it is absolutely vital that people keep in touch. Certainly, with the equipment and the upgrades that go on and on, it does a lot for the firefighters of this state.

I note that a few years ago several trucks were built in Queensland by Mills-Tui. They were not too flash at all, and some of those trucks when delivered had 150 faults; they just were not up to speed. Meningie had one which failed on its first trip and Ceduna received one which was not any good. Let us just hope that more due diligence is completed when contracts are given out for new fire trucks. Certainly, I commend the report.