

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES - 17 February 2009

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Ramsay—Premier, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change) (14:03): *I move:*

That this house expresses its sadness at the tragic bushfires that devastated Victoria on 7 February 2009; extends its deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who died or who are still missing; sends its condolences to all those affected by the fires; and commends the selfless and heroic efforts of all emergency services personnel and others who have responded to the crisis. This house pledges its moral and practical support to everyone involved in the rescue and recovery effort, and to the rebuilding of lives and communities. As a mark of respect to the memory of those who perished, the sitting of the house will be suspended until the ringing of the bells.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:25): I wish to speak briefly to support this motion. I offer my sincere condolences to everyone affected by these recent fires. It is hard—in fact, almost impossible—to imagine the horror of 7 February in those towns in Victoria. I extend my condolences to the people who have lost so many friends, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. The rebuilding will continue, but they will not have those people back.

I have seen a few bushfires in my time, but I remember the big one: Ash Wednesday in 1983. I was working in the Cooper Basin and there was a lot of despair among the men up there who knew that their places were under threat; and some found out their houses had gone, especially around the Greenhill Road area. I was also concerned as a young bloke about what was happening on my own property. Luckily, we came out of it unscathed. Obviously, there were fires in Adelaide and to the south of our property around Coonalpyn. I know that one man survived by lying in a sheep trough. He did get badly burned and I am sure that his injuries contributed to his death in later years. I certainly acknowledge the destruction that happened in the South-East on that day.

I acknowledge the donations of money, goods and fodder that are being made. The Australian spirit is alive and well. I acknowledge all the emergency service personnel and others, not just those people on the ground but also those coordinating the services. They are doing a great job and, on behalf of the people of Hammond, I acknowledge their efforts, especially the efforts of those people from my electorate who have gone to Victoria to assist in the cause.