



MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP

Member for Hammond

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What's happening to our hydrants? asks Pederick

Local MP Adrian Pederick is asking the government to explain why the fire plug maintenance program dropped some years ago has not been reintroduced to ensure the accessibility and efficiency of fire plugs around country SA.

A resident of Coomandook, Mr Pederick spent many hours recently assisting his local CFS colleagues fight fires in farming and bush land near his home and the surrounding district.

Lightning strikes during recent thunderstorms ignited tinder dry vegetation in many areas of country SA starting over 70 bushfires. CFS sources say the bushfire count around the state so far this year is nearly double that of last year.

Mr Pederick said country residents depend heavily on CFS crews' rapid response to contain and extinguish fires. 'How well they do that depends entirely on the availability of water to fight the fires. Fire crews can lose vital time searching for and clearing access to fire plugs, only to then find some plugs unserviceable.

'It's no help to hear SA Water say faulty plugs will receive the highest priority once reported. Without regular inspection and maintenance the first discovery of a problem is at the moment of greatest need,' Mr Pederick said.

'What use is the highest priority then? This is crisis management at its worst, and that's what this government excels at. You only have to consider their handling of water storage infrastructure and country road maintenance.'

Mr Pederick said he has raised the matter twice in Parliament in recent months and will keep on raising it until something is done.

'This is not only for the benefit of country residents, it also minimises the risk to our volunteer CFS personnel. Unnecessary and avoidable delays are just not acceptable.

'It appears the government are either leaving the task to chance or expecting CFS volunteers to pick up the slack by doing it themselves in between training, fundraising and fighting fires,' said Mr Pederick.

I have raised this matter in this House twice before in recent months and nobody in government seems to be listening. Perhaps none of them have family in the country. How many metres of tramline does it take to give our country cousins the peace of mind city people take for granted?

He also expressed concern that aerial water bombers were not used to their best advantage.

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'It was my observation that if they had been sent in at first light on the second day to douse the fires before they gathered momentum with the heat of the day and with the possibility of the wind picking up, at least one of the fires in our area could have been brought under control early. As it was it got away again and burnt many more hectares of scrub,' Mr Pederick said.