



Parliament of South Australia
MOTION
3 March 2020

FRANCES BEDFORD MP JP *Member for Florey*

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (17:20): On behalf of the people of Florey, I want to add my support of the Premier's motion on the South Australian bushfires. In doing so, I acknowledge the tragic loss of life and extend condolences to the families and friends of those who have died in the recent fires. I would also like to extend get well wishes to those injured in the fires and to all who have suffered in the Hills, Kangaroo Island and the South-East at Keilira, especially those who have lost everything, those who have lost their livelihoods and those who are part of communities at the centre of the emergencies of the past months. We are thinking of you as you begin recovery from the trauma you have endured because of the fires.

We are thinking of all who have responded—the thousands who have worked so hard to curb the fury of extreme nature in those long weeks of the fire fronts. I want to acknowledge everyone who played a part, big or small, particularly all those who have been on the front line. Thanks to all our local responders: the volunteers of the Salisbury CFS and SES; the Tea Tree Gully CFS and SES, who are the brigades in my part of the north-eastern suburbs; and all involved in those services throughout the state, as well as all the MFS firefighters, paid members of the SES and CFS, and the heroic airborne firefighters, who are now so much an important part of firefighting.

Thanks, too, to SAPOL and our amazing health, paramedic and ambulance staff for

their work. Thanks to all the NGOs and people at the centres that sprang up to assist people in shock and in need of immediate help or just a place to catch their breath. This was another front line. Thanks to those now stepping up: the BlazeAiders, animal carers and farmers. Farmers, some of them grappling with drought, have sent fodder. Thanks also to the Defence Force and members of the wider international responder communities. We have been so grateful for your help and stand ready to help you again as we have in the past.

Thanks as well to all who have led and taken part in fundraising activities. So often, despite immense loss and tragedy, natural disasters, such as these catastrophic fires, see our community come together united, selfless and imbued with solidarity and a shared sense of purpose because, while most of us were nowhere near the fire zone and cannot really imagine the terror of seeing a wall of fire coming towards us, or watch incredulously as a wind change either destroys or saves, we all want to be able to do something to help restore normality to lives and communities.

Members of my community in Florey have approached me, as they did after the Sampson Flat and Pinery fires, and asked what they could do, apart from making donations to one of the many appeals. I must say that there seem to be almost too many different appeals and that maybe it would be best to streamline this aspect, along with models of service delivery for the help available, sometime in the future whenever the reviews are taking place.

One thing that our community area hopes to promote when the time comes is to be part of Trees For Life's seed raising programs, perhaps as community volunteers or even by encouraging programs in schools so children can play their part in the recovery. While the best time for raising the many thousands of seedlings that will be necessary to regenerate our land and native habitat is a

way off yet, we can get ready and learn what we need to do to successfully care for seedling vegetation in the months and years ahead.

In the aftermath of disaster, communities which have been devastated will need all the support we can offer them as they recover, rebuild and find in themselves new reserves of resilience. I want to dwell on that word: resilience. When I entered this place more than two decades ago, I ran under the slogan or banner 'Community counts' because individual resilience in everyday life in the face of a crisis or setback relies on the sense of shared endeavour that comes from being part of a community.

The people of the Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island and Keilira will need us all to be there as they pick up the threads of their lives and look towards the eventual end of this extraordinary fire season and truly begin recovery. Throughout this state, there are communities who want to support them in that recovery. While we have not suffered the physical damage or interruptions to our lives, we share in our own way the mental impact of the new normal in which we all find ourselves: a climate that is changing in ways that alarm and confuse.

Of course, it is important for us to recognise this fire season has been extraordinary. Nothing about the bushfires that have devastated the state could be described as usual. Much of our nation has suffered because of fires which have started earlier, spread faster, burned longer and wider than ever before, and our thoughts are with those communities, too. As of 13 February, nationally we have lost more than 18.7 million hectares to fire and most tragically of all there have been 34 fatalities. Now, due to extensive and in some places flooding rains there are finally almost no fires burning across the country.

Over a billion animals are estimated to have perished, with some endangered species potentially wiped out as we see

others, like the iconic koalas, being pushed to the brink. We have seen over 6,500 buildings destroyed and smoke haze in major cities to levels never before experienced, with Sydney blanketed for weeks on end with dangerous levels of air quality, equivalent to smoking 37 cigarettes a day. Even our Kiwi cousins were affected by our drifting smoke staining glaciers a dirty brown and turning the sky over Auckland a burnt orange while smoke drifted as far as Chile on the far side of the Pacific.

NASA analysis in January suggested over 306 million tonnes of carbon dioxide have been released into the atmosphere, close to 60 per cent of the total carbon dioxide emitted from Australia in 2018. This is a disaster with local impacts, national impacts and global impacts, and of course devastating human impacts for those families who have lost loved ones and property and suffered in other ways. Many, sadly, may never be the same again.

We can never be ready for every possibility but perhaps we can be better prepared and, in striving to reach that point, we can show we are capable of change and adaptation when circumstances demand it. We have lost lives in this fire and we can only hope and pray that the dreadful loss of life experienced in great fires of the past, like the Ash Wednesday fires that devastated South Australia and Victoria in 1983 and, more recently, Victoria's Black Saturday in 2009, will never be repeated.

For statistics like those to remain in the past, we must do more. We must improve emergency planning and response even further and I hope that in the review to come, there will be an honest appraisal and adoption of recommendations, and a clear analysis of what has changed since the recent Pinery and Sampson Flat fires and their reviews. We surely now know this nation cannot continue to doubt the impact of climate change on our land. We must at last have a plan that helps us to reduce our emissions and adapt to the changing

weather patterns that will result from this warming climate.

We must also listen to, learn and adapt the wisdom and lessons of traditional Aboriginal practices. We ignore them at our peril. We owe it to those who have lost their lives and to those who have survived to give them all the support they need. There is so much to be done as the miracle of land, flora and fauna rejuvenation begins to take place. Those signs are now evident after recent, much welcome rain.

For now, at the very least, let's buy local as much as we can. For instance, can we use South Australian recycled products to meet the demand in fence posts? Could we source local mints for sale in this place as souvenirs? If we can, let's all travel to the untouched or now safe parts of the state and spend time and dollars there and get behind the #BookThemOut campaign, even if it is not time for us to have a break. I commend the motion to the house.



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