

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES (REVIEW) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BROCK (Frome) (17:54): I will be supporting this bill and I have taken on board the contributions of some of the speakers before me. I have not experienced (and I do not want to experience) a devastating bushfire similar to Ash Wednesday or the events in Victoria recently. That is something we do not want to do. I am sure that every member in this house and the other place are aware of this, and we want to be able to work together to ensure that this amendment bill for the fire and emergency services review is the best it can be and that all key stakeholders have a say in it.

As the member for Waite has indicated—and I listened with great interest to his comments—and he is correct: how do we educate people and get the message across? It is a very simple thing to talk about it, but how do we get the message over to all the people out there? In my short time in parliament, I have noted the expertise of people similar to the member for Stuart and others who have experienced bushfires first-hand. As I said, I have not experienced one and I do not want to; however, from an outsider's point of view, I feel for those affected by bushfire when I see them on the TV or hear about them. It is not only the loss of property or livestock: it is the loss of the lives of people and the scars that remain for most people who may not be physically affected but mentally affected for the rest of their lives.

I want to express my gratitude to the people who go out and fight the fires. We have paid firefighters for the MFS but we also have volunteers throughout all of South Australia, not only for the fires but also emergency services. They are volunteers who go out of their own accord in their own time. I know from my own experience of an accident that personally affected me some 18 years ago, the volunteers who went out there are still coming to terms with that after 18 years. I want to compliment the volunteers publicly to ensure that they are recognised and that they have the right equipment as we go forward with this bill.

There are numerous areas to deal with, one of which has been expressed by Mayor Peter Davis during the Port Lincoln bushfires regarding the clearing of native vegetation. I think we need to look at that with common sense because sometimes if you want to be able to clear it to prevent a fire, you are subject to restrictions, and I think we need to look at that going forward.

As I indicated earlier, we need to have very well presented and reliable equipment, not only for the mobile units but also the communication equipment to ensure that, as we go forward, we protect everybody and everybody can communicate well. As the member for Waite indicated, we also have to be very well prepared. How we get that information out to the people, I am not sure.

I have been listening to the previous speakers and I also have a list of proposed amendments here which will be discussed as we go through. As I go around my electorate, I talk to the people I believe have that first-hand knowledge of what exactly happens in an area. I have said it before: I liaise with my local government areas, and in my electorate I have five. I have liaised with those people; they are at the coalface. They can tell you exactly how they feel. In that regard, I am very impressed that, from what I understand, there has been fairly wide communication regarding this bill. If that is the case, congratulations.

One of the things I have a concern about is that I have been speaking to my local councils and they have said that, through the central Local Government Association and their own locally, they have been discussing this for some time. I have a concern that this will be a separate issue, but I will not discuss it here today. Today I received a document from the Local Government Association regarding some amendments they would like to put forward, and that was sent to three Independent members of this house, the Minister for Emergency Services and the shadow minister. Those amendments—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Surely four Independent members.

Mr BROCK: They were sent to three Independent members; one was missed out. As I indicated, that is a separate issue but those suggested amendments have been taken up by the member for Mitchell in his amendments.

[Sitting suspended from 18 : 00 to 19 : 30]

Mr BROCK: In closing, I want to say that I know every member of this house, irrespective of their politics or party lines, wants the best outcome from this bill when we are finished debating it. Not one of us here knows everything, and we all learn from each other. I know that I listen and learn from other people, gather whatever information I can from the debates and try to make the best decisions with my vote at the end of the day. I have listened, and will listen, to all speakers and all the amendments and, hopefully, at the end of the day, we will achieve the best outcome for all concerned. I commend the bill to the house.