

## **SPEECH**

House of Assembly\_Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013\_Page 7969

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS**

**The Hon. S.W. KEY (Ashford) (11:05): I move:**

That the 19<sup>th</sup> report of the committee, on Bushfire Preparedness of Properties in Bushfire Risk Areas, be noted.

**Mr BROCK (Frome) (11:19):** I also rise to speak on the Bushfire Preparedness of Properties in Bushfire Risk Areas report. If I may start by saying that I was astounded to see some of the things we did see on our tours out there. It just absolutely astounded me to see the danger, the growth and the vegetation out there that could in actual fact create a fire hazard and endanger not only the owners and their properties but also the people who are defending them.

As other speakers have indicated, we could not take all the witnesses because of the time frame, but certainly the recommendations we have come up with include requiring householders in bushfire zone areas to prepare bushfire action plans and lodge them with their local councils and emergency services. I would have thought that would be a common practice, but it was pretty widespread that that was not the case everywhere we went.

Another recommendation is about initiating discussions with the Insurance Council of Australia with a view to encouraging insurance companies to offer a rebate on fire insurance to householders in high-risk bushfire areas who prepare and lodge bushfire action plans with the insurer. Whilst that is a great move, I know that there would be a lot of properties out there that would have no insurance whatsoever. Again, that is another issue that I really do have.

One of the things I really found intriguing on the visits was the amount of what I call 'stupid' planning of some of the roads and cul-de-sacs. If there was a fire in certain areas, there is no way the people in those cul-de-sacs could actually get out, specifically if there was a fire down the other end. That is a real issue, and I think that local councils, as part of their planning organisation, really should be looking at that very closely. In a couple of cases, the roads going into the cul-de-sacs were very narrow; if cars were parked on the side of those roads, they would never be able to get a fire truck up there or get those people out. That is a real issue, and I think it is something that the local councils and planning minister should be taking on board.

Another issue is vegetation on vacant blocks and also on the blocks of households in the Adelaide Hills. We really must, as councils, as local government, as state government, and as natural resources committees, be proactive about these things and actually start clearing those well and truly before we get to the situation where some of the occasions arise.

In my area, the electorate of Frome—and I travel a fair bit—I have seen the vegetation grow fairly high in different areas and open spaces; however, they let it go for too long, and when it gets to the situation where it is just turning, just starting to die, the fire ban days come in (and they are coming in earlier at the moment) and therefore they cannot clear that roadside vegetation. It is the same with some of the adjoining blocks: they need to be cleared a lot sooner than they are at the moment.

We must also remember that the householders who do not do the right thing just walk away and expect the firefighters (whether they are full-time firefighters or volunteers through the CFS), the ambulance service, or whoever it may be, to come in and save their property. We must remember that those firefighters, whether they are full-time retainees or volunteers, are protecting our lives by coming into a situation where they are placing their own lives in jeopardy. We must remember that these people who try to protect us and do everything right are also parents; they have children. We should really start thinking about that.