



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

SPEECH

Tuesday, 10 February 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 10 February 2009 Page 829 Questioner Speaker Moylan, Judi, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof No Responder Question No.</p>
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Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (5.59 pm)—The malevolent course of fire and the subsequent tragic loss of life and destruction of property, stock and wildlife in Victoria have certainly galvanised this parliament and indeed the nation in an outpouring of grief, sympathy and support. It is indeed a tragedy of monumental proportions. Today I wish to add my voice to this motion and to support the comments of my colleagues in this place, many of whom yesterday and today spoke eloquently, with great compassion and with great sadness on the unfolding events in this terrible tragedy.

I would also like to take the opportunity to express condolences on my behalf, on behalf of my staff, my family and particularly on behalf of the people of the electorate of Pearce who I know would want to be associated with such a motion. Condolences go to those families whose neighbours, family members and friends have perished and we pledge our support for the rebuilding of their communities and for their ongoing support.

I know people in Pearce, as I said, would wish to be associated with this motion, as each year fire ravages parts of the electorate of Pearce. Fire looms as an ever-present threat in Pearce. In one of those infernos in the Avon in 2007, a local schoolteacher lost her life and many farms were devastated in that particular fire. The fire in this case was likely caused by an old power reticulation system, which in Western Australia is 40 to 50 years old. I heard the member for Mallee today speak in the House and also raise this particular issue. It is relevant because, although we in our parliaments throughout this country may need to deal with perhaps some unfinished business in terms of arson, we certainly need to deal with ageing power infrastructure, which I know in Western Australia has been the cause of many fires in rural areas, including the loss of life—certainly not to the extent that we have seen on this occasion in Victoria, but with terrible loss of property and all the heartache that that brings. This is something we can relatively easily attend to. We know it is a problem and it requires money to replace this ageing infrastructure of power reticulation systems.

Of course, lightning is often the cause of fires in my electorate as well. Before this House sat this year, for example, thousands of hectares of bush was burnt out in the coastal area of Yanchep within my electorate. Thankfully no lives were lost, but a great deal of damage was done to properties and national park and, of course, to wildlife in that region. Several thousand hectares were burnt out. Several years ago I sat in the burnt-out patio that was still attached to the burnt-out home of some of my ageing constituents, an elderly couple, who were grief-stricken to come back and find their property completely razed, everything gone—the sheds, the trucks, the tools, everything gone. But their grief was further exacerbated by having to go out and shoot 600 head of sheep that were seriously burnt in the fire. That fire in the Wundowie area was a result of arson and, if my memory serves me correct, that person was apprehended and prosecuted.

Each year, in the lead up to the summer season, men and women in the Pearce electorate give a great deal of time on a voluntary basis to prepare plans to manage fires and to provide emergency services. They put their lives at risk to look after the interests of others and they do it as a community service in a completely voluntary capacity. They do not ask for anything, they just pitch in and do what they know has to be done. They come from all walks of life and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to them and to their work, as Western Australia now faces the riskiest season for fire and that is a particular threat in the electorate of Pearce.

These people are our local heroes and I pay tribute to them, and particularly today to the brave, selfless and undoubtedly exhausted firefighters and emergency service workers in Victoria. To these men and women we owe a great debt of gratitude. May we never forget their selfless service and their courage. I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker Vale, that your husband has currently joined those firefighters in Victoria to add his voluntary services. We thank him for that.

We are equally grateful for the service of hundreds of volunteers caring for victims in the aftermath of the fires. We applaud the work of the health sector for the care of those suffering burns and injury. Our thoughts and prayers are with them for a full recovery. We also applaud the acts of courage and heroism of those in the community who took the time to look after neighbours and friends and family, putting their own lives often at

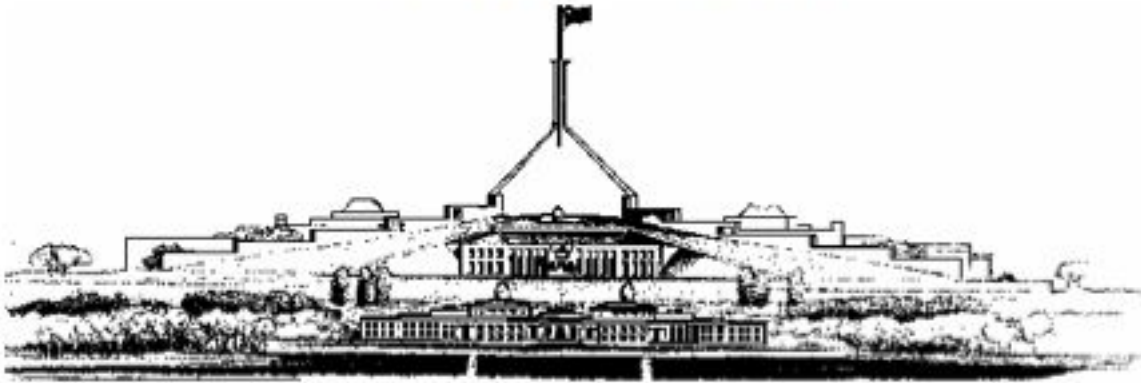
risk. But long after the flames have been doused and the last embers have stopped burning, the people of Victoria and their communities will need our compassion and our support both at a personal and a financial level.

Once again through my Victorian colleagues, to whom I offer my condolences and my support, I express condolences to the people within those electorates, and particularly on behalf of the people in the electorate of Pearce, who I know from my past experience will be very generous contributors to the rebuilding efforts in Victoria.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

SPEECH

Thursday, 4 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 4 February 2010	Source House
Page 477	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Moylan, Judi, MP	Question No.

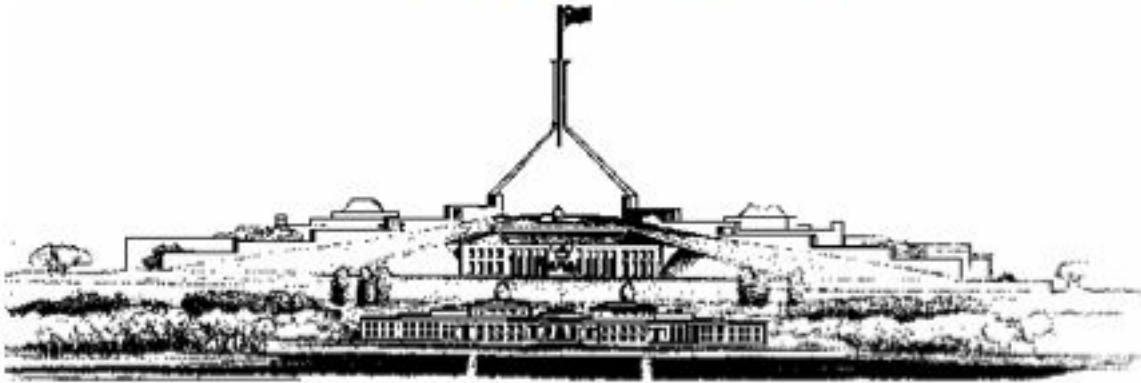
Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (2.26 pm)—I want to endorse the sentiments of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and my colleagues in this place and to say that, in the lead-up to New Year, the town of Toodyay was also threatened with a fire. It destroyed 38 homes and one person was burned. Fortunately, no-one lost their lives, but I know that the people of Toodyay would like me to express their thanks today to the people of Victoria, because there was an instant response of offers of help, donations, goods and people who flew from Victoria to Toodyay to practically assist the people of Toodyay. So, I know the people of Toodyay would want me to pass on their thanks and to let the people of Victoria know that they will be thinking about them this weekend on the anniversary of the events of last year.

The SPEAKER—The House, through its quiet attention to the remarks of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for McEwen, the member for Bendigo, the member for McMillan, the member for Gippsland, the Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and the members for Indi, Mallee and Pearce, has shown its support for the sentiments expressed. The solemn reflection is also indicative that the remarks that were made 12 months ago in this House have been reconfirmed and that our thoughts for those that suffered in the bushfires and suffer in further natural events are still here and that they will continue into the full rehabilitation and reconstruction. I thank the House.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADJOURNMENT

Pearce Electorate: Bushfires

SPEECH

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 3 February 2010
Page 306
Questioner
Speaker Moylan, Judi, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (7.30 pm)—I am sorry that I do not have sufficient time tonight but I did want to acknowledge the fires that ravaged the town of Toodyay in the electorate of Pearce and those who were responsible for fighting that fire and saving lives. As we prepared to ring in the New Year, the residents of Toodyay, which is 80 kilometres east of Perth, were fighting a catastrophic fire that risked lives; threatened firefighters; burned down 38 homes; took a terrible toll on farm animals, pets and local fauna; and burnt out 3,000 hectares of land in its malevolent path. The landscape will for many years bear the scars of this fire, as will the vibrant and close-knit community of Toodyay.

The ordeal will long be remembered. Stories abound of heroic deeds and close escapes. We are all very grateful that no human lives were lost. Tonight I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia, FESA, and the volunteer bushfire brigade under the direction of Murray McBride, the Chief Bushfire Control Officer, and Alan Knapp, the Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer. As well as being deputy chief, Alan is the ranger for the shire and was the first person on the scene. I went out with Alan to visit the worst affected areas. I was grateful for his excellent briefing and his obvious dedication to his job. I was very grateful for the constant updates and I thank the deputy director of FESA, Frank Pasquale, for assisting me.

There was literally an army of people assisting the community: the local police; the Shire of Toodyay Chief Executive Officer, Graham Merrick; and the President of the Shire, Chris Firns. I have to mention the recovery team, which was led by Charlie Wroth. They did a mighty job in the professional way the team worked, from the daily briefings in the memorial hall to the practical coordination of assistance to individuals. The Red Cross, the CWA and the Salvation Army were there; as were Marlene Andrich, the Sinclairs and the entire volunteer team in the kitchen which kept up the supply of food and drink to volunteers and anybody else who needed it. In 40-degree heat I found Melanie Pree, John Minchinson and their team of volunteers. They set up a coordinating post at the local showground doling out and receiving donated goods.

I know that the local people appreciated the quick action and personal visits of Premier Colin Barnett and the state and federal government agencies that quickly swung into action. The member for Brand briefed me on federal government assistance being offered and I thank him for the timely briefing that he provided to me. In particular I would like to thank Peter Clarke, the WA manager of Centrelink, and his team for the excellent work they did working over the whole New Year weekend and well beyond to provide the services they did to the community. I am sure that those on both sides of this House would want to join me in wishing the people of Toodyay a speedy recovery. Personally I feel very proud of the spirited way that the town has faced this catastrophe. I have been inspired by the acts of friendship and generosity that I witnessed over those days following the fire.

There were many others who assisted, and I am sorry to those I have not been able to acknowledge here tonight either through lack of detail and information or the short time allowed for this adjournment debate. But I would like to thank the member for Greenway and the member for Ryan for moving aside this evening and allowing me time to speak in this debate. As I said, in the aftermath of the fire there have been so many acts of generosity. We have had people from Victoria who lost their homes come to Toodyay to help others who they obviously have great sympathy for. We also had the tireless efforts of people who fundraised to assist. I know that on Saturday night there was the 'Hope from Ashes' concert, which was organised by Heather Ham. I hope that also added to that fund to assist people to rebuild their lives.

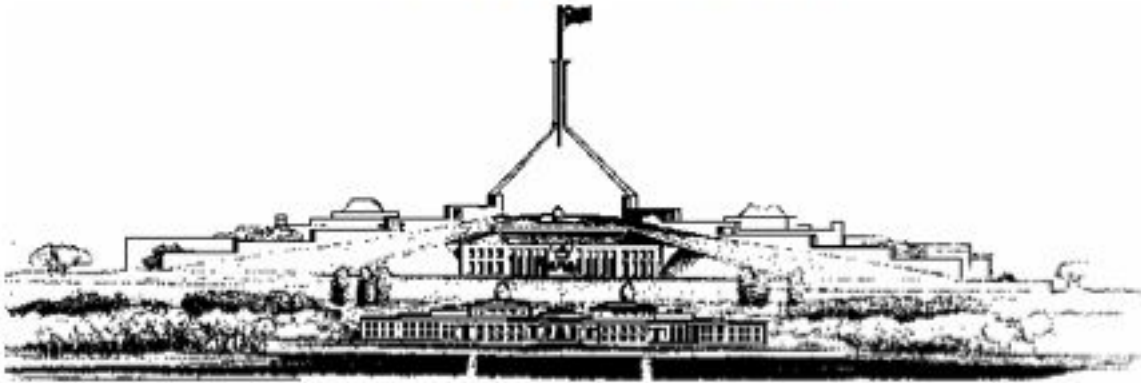
It is tragic especially to see young families who lost everything in that fire. It is bad enough to lose things of monetary value but we know that there are many things that people lose in these catastrophic events that have greater than monetary value. So I join with other members of the House to wish the community of Toodyay well in this reconstruction phase and in rebuilding the facilities and restoring the personal possessions that they have lost.

The SPEAKER—I am sure that honourable members would allow me to associate them with the remarks of the member for Pearce and pass on our hopes and aspirations for those within her electorate.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Pearce Electorate: Toodyay Bushfire

SPEECH

Thursday, 25 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Thursday, 25 February 2010 Page 68 Questioner Speaker Moylan, Judi, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (4.49 pm)—Since the devastating bushfire tore through the outskirts of the town of Toodyay in my electorate on the eve of New Year, residents have anxiously awaited the release of the EnergySafety WA report. Those anxious about the origin of the fire included young families without any insurance who lost their homes and possessions, and others who were underinsured. These are folk who will not be in a position to rebuild or replace what they have lost. The impact on them is unimaginable.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, it was thought that faulty powerlines were the most probable cause of the fire. This speculation was hardly surprising, as a fire in 2007 which cost the life of young school teacher, Ms Michelle Mack, was caused by clashing, sagging powerlines.

I have spoken in this place previously of the destruction that was left in the wake of the 2007 and now the 2009 fires, and the ongoing risk of an ageing power reticulation system. In this fire, one person was burnt, 38 homes were lost and many were damaged. Personal possessions were destroyed, 3,000 hectares of land, fencing and sheds were burnt, threatening the livelihood of many.

Gathered in the memorial hall on Friday the worst fears of many were realised when the EnergySafety report could not find any definitive evidence that a fault in the power reticulation system caused this fire. But a careful reading of the report will show that the inquiry was inconclusive; thus, the people of Toodyay continue to live with the frustration, uncertainty and indeed the ongoing threat of fires from this source.

The introduction and summary of the EnergySafety report made the following comments:

The Fire and Emergency Service Authority (FESA) notified EnergySafety on 29 December 2009 that the bushfire (FESA incident number 141266) originated in the vicinity of Western Power's T303 spur overhead single-phase high voltage 12.7 kV power line.

...

EnergySafety has been unable to determine if electricity from Western Power's distribution system caused the bushfire on 29 December 2009.

The residents of Toodyay have a long and painful recovery process ahead, and many are upset that

their questions about the source of the fire have gone unanswered. The challenge remains though—that is, to rebuild lives. The public response has been exceedingly generous. However, I know that there is still work to do. I know from talking to the head of the recovery team, Mr Charlie Wroth, and the shire president, Mr Chris Firns, that cash donations are still very much needed to help people rebuild their homes and replace their possessions.

The town of Toodyay continues to be a thriving cultural centre. There are many who think that the town itself burnt down, and therefore visitors are staying away. But that is not the case. Toodyay is home to some of Western Australia's earliest history and earliest buildings. Notwithstanding the bushfire, Toodyay and its immediate surrounds are as beautiful as ever, and the town buildings and the main street remain untouched by fire and are as charming as they have ever been. More importantly, the people of Toodyay have warm hearts and they are very friendly. They are looking forward to welcoming back to Toodyay many visitors to the town, so that they can continue to thrive and to get back on their feet.

I hope that anyone listening to this adjournment debate today will help the people of Toodyay get back on their feet by returning to the town in great number and helping the many folk there to rebuild their lives, and by enjoying that beautiful historic town and the many wonderful historic buildings and the lovely natural environment that the town has to offer. It is one of the older settlements in Western Australia and places like Connor's Mill still stand today. It was one of the places that ground the colony's first wheat into flour. We have no rice in Toodyay, I can assure you, but we have lots of productive farming land, including wheat, sheep, dairy, orchards and many other agricultural pursuits. We look forward to helping the people of Toodyay get back on their feet following this very devastating event in its history.