

### **\$4 Million Bill For East Coast Fires**

Last summer's devastating East Coast bushfires have cost the State Government almost \$4 million dollars, Labor Member for Lyons Heather Butler announced today.

Mrs Butler said the direct cost of the fires, including assistance to individuals, councils, emergency management and restoration work, was estimated at \$3.9 million.

"More than \$500,000 was provided by the State Government in personal hardship and distress assistance, including emergency payments and financial assistance in the weeks following the fires at St Marys and Scamander," Mrs Butler said.

"With the fires destroying 27 homes and damaging more than 50 properties, emergency assistance payments were made to 274 families during the first 10 days of the disaster.

"The Government's response to the fires – which has included restoring damaged public assets — has cost more than \$2.2 million and involved several agencies, including the departments of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Health and Human Services, Tourism, Arts and the Environment, Police and Emergency Services and Premier and Cabinet."

The State Government contributed \$350,000 to the Community Recovery Fund, which helped implement a range of initiatives in the Community Recovery Plan, including funding clean-ups and restoration grants to small businesses, primary producers and voluntary non-profit organisations.

"We have provided \$300,000 to more than 50 small businesses and primary producers to help them get back on their feet," Mrs Butler said.

An additional \$50,000 was made available to the Red Cross Public Appeal and it is expected that more than \$400,000 will be paid to Break O'Day and Sorell municipalities to assist in replacing essential public assets.

The State Government is expecting to receive around \$610,000 from the Commonwealth under national funding arrangements, which includes the Commonwealth's contribution of \$350,000 towards the Community Recovery Fund.

Mrs Butler said since the fires, the State Government had been proactive in reducing

the risk of a subsequent disaster.

“We have undertaken a \$625,000 program to reduce the dangerously high fuel loads in bushfire-prone areas and to educate the public about the danger of high fuel loads and preparing their own properties,” Mrs Butler said.

“And we are working together – combining the expertise of the Tasmanian Fire Service, Forestry Tasmania and the Parks and Wildlife Service – to prevent such a devastating fire happening again.

“We will take every reasonable precaution to control any future bushfires and reduce their severity.

“We will do everything possible to protect Tasmanians from the hardship and heartache endured by the people of the East Coast last summer.”