

**26 FEBRUARY 2009**

**VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES**

Mrs **BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I rise today to support the condolence motion regarding Black Saturday, 7 February 2009, when at least 210 people in our neighbouring State of Victoria lost their precious lives.

I have a few personal connections, having lived in Belgrave in the Dandenongs where my husband was a councillor and a member of the local CFA. Also, in 1986 I experienced a house fire when living in Howrah. The terrible east coast fires of 2006 which devastated so many families and individuals mean that many Tasmanians do understand first-hand some of the fear and sense of loss people in towns such as Traralgon, Churchill - where my grandmother lived on a farm - Bendigo, Flowerdale, Yea and Kilmore have experienced.

Sunday 8 February was my 40th wedding anniversary. We had spent our honeymoon at the Cumberland in Marysville. I was horrified to hear from a friend in Victoria on that Sunday morning. Only a few people were on the oval when the helicopter flew over it. She was watching television as I was speaking to her. They had had their honeymoon a month after us, also in Marysville, and the horror in her voice transfixed me as she said there are only a few people on the oval. The town had been wiped out.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful Tasmanian people for their outstanding generosity and response to the appeal for clothing. Ten containers and four truck loads of clothing and soft goods have gone to Victoria. UnitingCare Victoria has had a warehouse, trucks, labour and fork lifts donated and is storing the goods, with distribution to families beginning this week - initially in the badly affected Kinglake district.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Presbyterian Church have also requested access to the Tasmanian donations for their shopfront to be established in Whittlesea for a minimum of the next 12 months. The anticipated need was much less than what has happened. People have found that there is much more demand for our clothes than they expected.

Thanks to our freight companies, among them Tasfreight, Toll, Keith Ives, Total Care Logistics, Chris Bell, Hertz and especially Sue Medcraft and her family for their spontaneous kindness and marvellous cooperation with the distribution of all those goods. Thanks to

those Tasmanians who are continuing to work on the front line fighting the fires, organising various aspects of the recovery and return to health. There are still terrific ideas coming forward, as the Premier said. There is the example of the people at Woodsdale who have been experiencing drought in their area for many years now, with many people in desperate circumstances, but they gave the hay that they had been given to the people of Victoria. There is a nice example with another Tasmanian connection, I guess: there is a family from Tasmania living in Kinglake who managed to get out safely. The young mother of that family actually jumped into the car of another lady who was stopped by the side of the road and probably saved her life and got her out as well. She managed to get to family and then started to count the cost of losing their animals, but then heard that their pig, Wilhelmina, had survived, so I guess she has become a bit of a Tassie connection. She is a symbol of how people have resilience and can survive through these terrible circumstances.

Lastly, on behalf of the Bartlett Government, our thoughts and prayers are with those who are suffering loss at so many levels. We wish them well as they rebuild their lives, their communities and their sense of personal security. I hereby support the motion.