



Amanda Rishworth MP

Member for Kingston

Speech to Federal Parliament

14 May 2009

Victorian Bushfire Tragedy

Ms Rishworth: (Kingston) (12:54 PM) —I rise today to reflect on the devastating loss suffered by the Australian community, and especially the Victorian communities, during the Victorian bushfires this summer. This disaster touched all Australians, no matter where we live, and our hearts went out to the families who were directly affected by it. It was this response, this reaching out, that for me was so quintessentially Australian. The Australian people did not forget about their fellow citizens. Australians both young and old banded together and volunteered their time to raise money to help those who had lost their homes or their loved ones. I believe the sentiment we saw during this time, and continue to see, is a great testament to the Australian spirit and the character of the Australian people.

This spirit was vibrant amongst the people I know in my local community in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. They did a lot to raise money through their schools, through individual contributions and through local community groups. I want to put on the record today the names of a number of community groups that deserve a mention for their dedication in helping to raise funds.

The Rotary Club of Hallet Cove held a quiz night, which raised \$1,550. They do a lot of work in my electorate. They are involved with the local high school. They prepare students for interviews and to go out into the world. The club's president, John Myers, and his team did a great job in raising money for the victims of the Victorian bushfires.

The Reynella Business and Tourism Association raised \$3,000 by holding a sausage sizzle in front of the Old Reynella Horse Changing Station on Saturday, 14th February. I went down to the event but I left the cooking of the sausages to someone more capable than I am. I collected money instead. The association did a great job. They are normally focused on helping local businesses to sell their products, but on this day they gave something back to the community.

The Happy Valley CFS also came to the event. They had been responding to a grass fire the night before, but they came down to the event at nine o'clock in the morning to raise donations. Also helping out at that barbeque were the Old Reynella Town Bakery, Old Reynella Town Quality Meats, Vale Signs and Romeo's Foodland Old Reynella. They all deserve a big thank you. Also deserving a thank you are Geoff King, who organised the event, and all the other volunteers who came to help out on that day.

I would also like to recognise a gentleman by the name of John Bowman. He is not with a particular community group but he believed that he needed to stand up and organise a fundraising concert in the area to raise money. We all know that the hardware stores raised a whole lot of money. I went down to the barbeque at my local Bunnings store in Noarlunga. I want to pay particular tribute to the employees who worked on that barbeque, because they were not being paid. It was not their shift; they spent extra time, outside their shift, to stand there and cook those sausages. In many cases this was after a very long shift. I think the employees of the Bunnings store at Noarlunga who spent their time doing that really need to be recognised.

I would also like to recognise the communities of Willunga, McLaren Vale, McLaren Flat and all the residents of the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia. Kim Pagon was one of the victims of the Willunga fire in the summer of 2008. Although she did not lose her house in that fire, her house was particularly damaged by it. Kim and her local community of 1,000 residents donated goods and money which were sent to help the communities affected by the Victorian bushfires. So there is a great community spirit there. The Victorian bushfires were a tragedy, but the one positive thing that came out of them was that they allowed the Australian people to display their best side when they contributed to those communities in need.