

Friday, 25th September 2009

### **CHANGES TO FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES ACT PASSED**

New laws, which amend the *Fire and Emergency Services Act*, are expected to be in force during this year's fire season after passing Parliament yesterday.

Emergency Services Minister, Michael Wright said the changes were introduced into Parliament following an independent review of the Act, recommendations from the Ministerial Review of Bushfire Management and as part of the Government's response to the Wangary Coronial Inquest.

"Communities will benefit from increased attention to the preparedness, prevention, response and recovery phases of emergency service management, and the emergency services will benefit through a much closer and more efficient working relationship," Minister Wright said.

Changes to the legislation include:

- Increasing penalties for fire safety breaches
- Allowing for urban fire urban bushfire risk areas to be established
- Changing the current three-tiered bushfire management framework with a two-tiered framework consisting of a new State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) and the establishment of Bushfire Management Committees across the State.
- Requiring each bushfire management committee to prepare and maintain a Bushfire Management Area Plan for its region

These legislative changes will further ensure that communities and emergency workers are well prepared for fire and emergencies."

Minister Wright said he was pleased to see the legislation pass before he attended a special Ministerial Council meeting for State and Territory Emergency Services Ministers in Canberra today.

"Today's meeting will look at ways to improve preparedness and planning between the Commonwealth and States and Territories for the upcoming bushfire season."

Minister Wright has also welcomed yesterday's announcement that Telstra has been selected to roll out the national emergency warning system.

"I am told the built system will be completed by the end of October, with comprehensive testing to take place throughout November," Minister Wright said.

"This system will provide our state's emergency services with another mechanism to warn communities in the event of an emergency."

"I am confident this system will complement the measures announced by the State Government to better prepare and protect South Australians from bushfires."