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| **House of Assembly** | **Logo  Description automatically generated** | **Tony Piccolo MP** |
| **Extract from Hansard**  **PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: NOARLUNGA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE UNIT** | **Thursday 3 November 2022** |

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (11:48):** I would like to speak in support of this report and recommendation from the Public Works Committee, in terms of upgrading facilities for the SES in the southern suburbs. My view would be that any upgrading of facilities for our emergency services, particularly for those that are volunteer based, is worthy of our support and also worthy of our support in our community.

All our emergency services, whether they are paid workers or volunteers, play an increasingly important role in our community, whether it is the CFS, the MFS or the SES, and there are a whole range of other allied emergency services as well. The reality is their role is increasing in terms of the community's safety, given the climate change environment we live in today. The reality is that, with the extremes of weather we are now experiencing, we are going to be calling more and more on our emergency services to actually keep our communities safe.

Some things we can do better and therefore perhaps we will not need their services, but in some situations we are not going to be able to retrofit our urban footprint or retrofit a whole range of things, so our volunteers will be required to do a lot of emergency work in terms of rescue, protecting life and also protecting property.

For the short period of time I was the emergency services minister and involved in emergency services in this state, I was fortunate to visit a number of SES units across the state, both in the metro area and the country regions. In the general community, I think they are one of the services perhaps not fully understood in terms of the scope of work they perform in our community.

They do more than just sandbagging or removing trees and branches off roofs, etc. They do quite a bit of rescue work in association with the marine rescue wing of their service. I know there is always a call for additional resources along the south coast, along the Limestone Coast, for the rescue work they do there because the water is a bit rougher. When I visited some units in the country areas I was pleasantly surprised at the scope of work they do in terms of rescue work. They actually go up and down cliff faces, etc., rescuing people.

There is always a greater need for volunteers. Like all volunteer-based organisations, the SES and the CFS were hit by COVID in terms of people not being able to participate as volunteers. More importantly, and this is generally true right across the volunteer sector, some people have not returned to volunteering work. Both as a government and as a parliament, we need to work out why this is the case and what we need to do to remove barriers to people participating in voluntary work.

My view is that voluntary work is very important not only from a cost-saving perspective but also in terms of what volunteers do, whether that is in the SES, the CFS or volunteers in a whole range of other fields. Volunteers help build communities and build connections and that is very important. They also build a skill base in communities; they build leadership skills. People who take on leadership roles within the SES or the CFS actually build leadership skills that are transferrable to other parts of the community and can be brought into their work life.

It is increasingly tougher for volunteers. A lot of volunteers who may also work full time will find it harder to find the time to put into volunteer work if they are raising families. Having said that, I reaffirm that we as a government and as a parliament need to work out what we need to do to assist volunteers. One of the biggest complaints I get from people who want to volunteer is some of the bureaucracy behind just trying to volunteer, how difficult it is to volunteer, all the paperwork you have to do and all the record keeping you have to do, etc. Some of it makes sense, but some of it may be counterproductive and a negative in terms of our community.

When we were in opposition, I was very pleased to commit to investing in an SES unit in my electorate. I know that people in the Liberal Party have derided those election commitments. I can assure you it is one of the election commitments that has been publicly aired in my community. People know exactly where it is going, people know exactly how much it is going to cost and people do actually support it.

In fact, one of my local newspapers, The Bunyip, has all the election commitments my party made at election time. Just before the election, I was on page 3 and after the election they said, 'Okay, Piccolo, we are going to check every one you deliver.' I can assure you we will be delivering, despite the Liberal Party warning us not to commit to those commitments. Building an SES unit in Gawler is one of those commitments. Despite the fact that the Liberal Party want us to break those promises and not support the commitments we made, I think it is important that we do maintain those commitments.

*Mr Teague interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Heysen is called to order. There is a point of order being raised by one of his colleagues, which I will hear under 134.

**The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER:** I have been reading the Public Works Committee report closely and I am struggling to identify the relevance of anything the member for Light is saying to it.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Light was reflecting, as I understand it, in general terms on the government's policy including in relation to emergency services in his own electorate and other government policy. I will listen carefully. It has been the practice of the—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members! It has been the practice of the house to allow members some latitude in debates of this type.

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Light! The member for Heysen and the minister will cease their exchange. Order!

*The Hon. J.K. Szakacs interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Cheltenham is called to order.

**The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner:** He is undermining you, sir.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Light has the call.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** Thank you—

*Members interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Florey! Member for Cheltenham, if you have a matter to raise in relation to the conduct of the member for Heysen, you can raise it as a point of order.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** I am glad that I am able to light up the debate this morning.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Light has the call.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** My day job has been a dad, so dad jokes come with that. Coming back to the SES unit, which has been promised and will be delivered by the government, it was one of about $16 million worth of commitments which my party made leading up to the election and which we will be delivering on 100 per cent. I can assure you that my local councils are very impressed with the commitments we have made. They probably wanted more but we can only do so much.

One of the commitments we made is the Gawler-Willaston SES unit. This is a project for which I clearly lobbied within my party to get the funding but, more importantly, I would like to acknowledge John Lawrence, who is an SES officer previously with the Salisbury unit, who lobbied quite strongly and has been campaigning for some time for us to get the SES unit built in the Gawler area.

The new SES unit or facility in the southern suburbs is very important. I can tell you that the one at the other end of the metropolitan area in the north is important. My electorate is currently covered by two SES units. When I say 'covered', they are not actually located in that area. We have the Salisbury unit, which do good work and also the Kapunda unit, which also do good work. The Kapunda unit—I must get this right—also have horse unit, a horse service within their unit too.

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr Brown:** What are the names of the horses?

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** The names of the horses? If they were named after me, they would be thoroughbreds, wouldn't they? Or the Italian Stallion.

*Members interjecting:*

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** The interjections warranted that comment, I think. I will get back on the horse. Those two units do serve our area, but they are spread thin, and that is the importance of this new Gawler unit. I would also like to acknowledge the minister who came out to Gawler recently to make the official announcement on behalf the government that the unit would be proceeding and that work on that unit will be commencing early next year. I can assure you it is fully supported by those other two units there; they were present at the announcement and they think it is important as well. It was also supported by the CFS because all emergency services work together in partnership to make our community safer.

For me, it is always good news when I hear money is being put into our emergency services, particularly like the SES unit here. I must for the record mention I will be joining the SES unit in my Gawler-Willaston unit. I am not sure how useful I will be. I might be behind pushing the pens and doing some admin work; I am not sure how much physical work I could do.

**The Hon. J.K. Szakacs:** Orange is your colour.

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO:** Orange is my colour, thank you, minister. Orange is the new black, isn't it? I support the recommendation and the committee's work.