



The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (12:42): I look forward to speaking in support of this motion, and I also commend members on both sides of the chamber for their comments on this matter. I will not seek to repeat some of the great stories we have heard this morning about our firefighters and other emergency service workers. I would like to emphasise something perhaps a little bit different: 4 May is one of the most important days on the calendar for our emergency services as it marks the feast day of St Florian, the patron saint of firefighters and other emergency services workers.

In Gawler, on Monday 4 May an informal, impromptu ceremony was held in the morning in Pioneer Park to mark St Florian's Day. Representatives from the Concordia Country Fire Service brigade, represented by Brigade Captain Robert Borgo, senior firefighter Matthew Williamson from the Gawler Metropolitan Fire Service, John Lawrence from the State Emergency Services and South Australia Police inspector

Shane Addison laid a wreath, along with me, to mark and honour the lives of those emergency service workers given in the course of their duty. The wreath also represented those people who have lost their lives during fire and other disasters.

It is very important to remember that lives are lost across a whole range of disasters in our community, and only yesterday another life, unfortunately, was lost due to a house fire in Adelaide. The Gawler RSL allowed the service to take place at the memorial, and they were represented by their Vice President, Mr Pat Adams. The service was only a very simple one to mark the occasion, because the COVID-19 health restrictions prevented any broad community-based event from taking place. The ceremony is both a thanksgiving and memorial event, held to thank those emergency services workers who help keep our community safe and a memorial to those who lost their lives in natural disasters such as fires and floods.

While it was initially a day of commemoration for firefighters, in more recent times it has included other emergency services workers. As we have seen over the last few decades, they work very closely together during times of crisis. Each emergency service might play a different role but all are critical to maintaining community safety.

St Florian's feast day is also celebrated as International Firefighters' Day, which was instituted in 1999 following the deaths of five firefighters in a wildfire in Linton, Victoria. While the commemoration services have been held at the national level for some years, no local ceremonies have taken place. This year was to mark the first community-based ceremony but unfortunately, as I said, the health crisis prevented that. However, a simple and respectful ceremony did take place at 7am on Monday 4 May in Pioneer Park. Plans for a community-based event had commenced earlier in the year but had to be shelved as the enormity of the coronavirus became evident.

I look forward, as do other community leaders, to soon working with all local emergency services to start planning for a much bigger community-based event in 2021. I believe that with a bit more time and the capacity of volunteers to participate with career workers in the emergency services—and I think we should also include other emergency services workers—we will have a very respectful event next year. I will put out this call: that services that wish to be involved in the planning and participation of the 2021 ceremony in my community are invited to contact my electoral

office and we will work alongside them.

St Florian was born around 250 CE in present-day Austria and was responsible for the organisation and training of elite soldiers for the sole purpose of fighting fires. Florian himself rose through the military ranks to become commander of the imperial army in Noricum. He became a martyr after refusing to participate in the persecution and sacrifice of Christians under his authority, resulting in his execution at the hands of the Romans.

St Florian's feast day is also celebrated as International Firefighters' Day, which is the subject matter of this motion. I thank my colleague, the member for Elizabeth, for bringing this to parliament today. As I mentioned, International Firefighters' Day was instituted in 1999 following the deaths of firefighters in Victoria.

St Florian's death is particularly resonant with those in our firefighting community, as he stood by and ultimately lost his life for the same humane beliefs and values that are shared by firefighters today. The day is marked by the adornment of red and blue ribbons, symbolising the elements of fire and water, which firefighters and other emergency services workers work with.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made to our emergency services workers by their respective support organisations. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Country Fire Service Volunteer Association, the State Emergency Service Volunteers Association, the United Firefighters Union, the

Public Service Association and the Police Association for the support those associations provide to their volunteers and career workers. On behalf of my community, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our firefighters and other emergency services workers for their efforts in protecting us, our town, state and country from extreme weather and other disasters.