

November 19 2009

The Editor
Advertiser Newspaper
King William St
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Sir

The Education Department has instituted a policy to close schools when "catastrophic" fire conditions are forecast. Ms Jan Andrews, deputy CE from DECS has stated that school closures were decided following advice from CFS and the Bureau of Meteorology. (The Advertiser, November 19)

CFS Volunteers are concerned that the public is being given the impression that the CFS is making these decisions. That is not the case. CFS advice extends only to the fire ban rating on the day in question. It is solely the Education Department that has made the decision that schools will close and that school buses will not run as a consequence.

Decisions to close schools were made last fire season on the Eyre Peninsula, before the new categories of fire danger ratings were introduced. CFS Volunteers bore the brunt of community anger over the decision.

The CFS Volunteers Association, on behalf of our 15,500 volunteer members, would like to make clear that the brigades and the CFS have no input into these decisions. In fact, many of our members consider schools as potential safe havens that are more easily defendable during a bushfire.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Shirley
Executive Director, CFSVA