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New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly

St Florian's Day of International Firefighters

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I am pleased to contribute to debate on this important motion. I thank the member for Holsworthy for moving this motion and I thank the member for Fairfield and the member for Heathcote for their contributions. International Firefighters' Day, as we have heard, is observed each year on 4 May when we are invited to remember past firefighters, especially those firefighters who have died while serving our community and those who have dedicated their lives to protecting all of us.

I quote Lieutenant J. J. Edmondson who in 1999, as part of the Australian arm of the International Firefighters Day Association and a volunteer lieutenant and firefighter in the Country Fire Authority in Victoria, said:

The role of a firefighter in today's society—be it urban, rural, natural environment, volunteer, career, industrial, defence force, aviation, motor sport, or other is one of dedication, commitment and sacrifice—no matter what country we reside and work in. In the fire service we fight together against one common enemy—fire—no matter what country we come from, what uniform we wear or what language we speak.

I thank him for organising, on behalf of the States and the Territories, our contributions to acknowledging St Florian's Day. Members have heard that St Florian is the patron saint of firefighters. St Florian, the first-known commander of one of the firefighting squads in the Roman Empire, lost his life protecting communities.

Each year emergency services in different communities in New South Wales and across Australia hold events such as fetes, open days and fundraisers for campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of communities pulling together. It is a time to show support for and acknowledgement of the commitment and dedication of firefighters locally and internationally.

We remember as a mark of respect those who have been injured or who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It is a time to say thank you and to raise awareness of local issues.

I express gratitude to firefighters everywhere, including my young son who is a member of my local brigade. I acknowledge the firefighters in my electorate of Blue Mountains and those constituents who are still rebuilding after the 2013 fires, in which many hundreds of people lost their homes. In those fires many pets and wildlife were lost in the beautiful Blue Mountains, but fortunately no human lives were lost and I thank the firefighters and other emergency services personnel for that.

I thank our fantastic Fire and Rescue NSW crews, retained and permanent, in the Blue Mountains.

I thank our Rural Fire Service volunteers, group officers and all those who work every day in the fire control centre in collaboration with the community.