

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 1ST MARCH 2015

AUSTRALIAN YEAR OF THE FARMER

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:53): I rise to support this notice of motion by the member for Schubert, that notes that 2012 is the Australian Year of the Farmer, and acknowledges the contribution that farmers and all others involved in primary production make to both feeding our nation and to sustaining Australia's economy.

My great-great grandfather came out here from England in 1840, so only four years after the birth of this state. As I think I have mentioned in this house before, William Pederick was going to go down and book his passage—I think it was at Portsmouth—and his mother said, 'You're mad.' He wanted to borrow a horse, and she said, 'No, you're not riding into Portsmouth to book your passage to Australia,' so he walked the 30 miles to do it.

William and Mary came out in 1840. They settled in Plympton. They had a little shoe or boot shop, apart from a farm. We have a lot of discussion these days about protecting arable land. I suggest that Plympton and certainly where this chamber sits are probably on some of the most fertile land in this state. But that is the way of early settlement; they always settle along the rivers and that kind of thing. Some of this country would even challenge some of the most fertile country in the electorate of the member for Goyder on Yorke Peninsula. I know that is a big call, but it is good land.

They were there for quite a few years, but as the colony expanded they migrated north a bit to near the Gawler River and farmed in that area for many years. My grandfather farmed at Angle Vale near Heaslip Road. My father, who was born in 1920, farmed there as well before the compulsory acquisition of land for Edinburgh air base and the Weapons Research Establishment, after which time Dad moved down to Coomandook 51 years ago. Essentially that means I have been there all my life.

Our family, in a farming sense, have had a bit of a look around the state. I only have to go back one generation to my father, who used to walk behind horses. I find it an interesting entry in my grandfather's diary when my father was born. It goes along the line that one day he was ploughing the back 80 acres and the next day happened to be the day my father was born and my grandfather put in his diary, 'Went to Gawler'. There was no mention of what it was for, that it was to witness the birth of my father. The next day the diary entry was, 'Back ploughing the back 80 acres'. I guess it shows how committed my grandfather was to farming. It was a little odd that he did not make more recognition of my father's birth.

I certainly love hearing the stories of what happened in those early days. My grandfather initially would come into the city with horse and cart delivering hay, chaff or stoked hay. There were a lot of feed mills in the city and around the place. I remember dad telling me a classic story: being a good Congregationalist, he who would never have gone into a pub, but you had to weigh your own loads. He would go into the hotel and ask for the weighbridge keys and weigh the load for the feed.

Farming has progressed a long way from those days. Dad only stopped actively driving tractors with me 12 years ago, when he was 80. He was driving a 300-horsepower, eight-wheel tractor, and you could not lever him out of it. It was a bit of trouble getting him up there, but once he was in place he was there for the duration. This is what is happening with farming right across the state and country. We have heard that production has increased exponentially, as the member for Schubert rightly described. Farms can now feed so many more people than they used to feed. As the member for Flinders mentioned, and as I believe, we will meet the challenge of feeding not just the nation but the world in the future.

We have to make sure the right legislation and regulation is in place to assist farmers and does not hinder that growth. There are so many things people need to comply with. I saw recently after the drought that a lot of people in my electorate had to put in private desalination plants just to survive around the Lower Lakes—lakes Alexandrina and Albert. Now there is an issue where the EPA wants to license that brine disposal. They are going to charge people who have actually looked after themselves for their water, and I think that is absolutely disgraceful—capitalising on people who have invested better than \$200,000 in each instance to look after themselves.

The progress of farming has been massive. We have gone from times, even in my early days, of operating tractors and putting in crops. You could work a paddock eight to 12 times before you sow it. Nowadays people spray the paddocks out over summer to get rid of the summer weeds, and then come in with one or two knock-downs coming into the season, when the season opens in April and May, to sow the crop. Many years ago we had single furrow ploughs. I know that, just in my area, we have 80-foot and 86-foot air seeders operating; and I know that in Queensland you have up to at least 100-foot air seeders operating, because it has always been about getting bigger so that you could remain viable to compete in this day and age.

But it is not cheap; it is expensive. Farming harvesters can be worth towards \$800,000 or \$900,000, depending on the options. Large air seeders, as I was discussing, complete with a cultivator, can be around \$600,000. Tractors can be \$300,000. Self-propelled boom sprays can be \$200,000 to \$400,000. It is a massive investment for private operators who are not just feeding this state but feeding our nation and feeding the world.

One thing we certainly need to be aware of is the issue of foreign ownership, and I think that, certainly, on both a state and federal basis there should be a register of who owns what so that we can keep track of who is owning what. Let's not be wrong here, there has been some great initiatives by foreign investment in the past. We have seen, whether or not you like it, the Burke irrigation area opened up. We have seen Esperance opened up by the Americans. However, I think that, with the issue of food security that has been touched on by the member for Schubert and others, we do need to make sure that we know who owns the land, and just as importantly who owns the water, and I think that both these markets could be tidied up.

I note that minister Gago was recently asked at a function about the foreign ownership issue and she just dismissed it, from what I understand, as a federal issue. Well, I do not think it is just a federal issue. I think that we all need to be involved and be well aware of what is going on around us with the production of clean, green food in this state of ours.

I would like to congratulate Philip Bruem and the people involved in the Australian Year of the Farmer. It is a great initiative. I believe that it has some federal government backing, but also a range of sponsors have got behind the Australian Year of the Farmer organisation, and I congratulate every one of them. I know that they have got nine vehicles—I think they are Toyotas—they take to shows right around the country. I have certainly seen them at the Karoonda Farm Fair and at the Cleve field days, apart from other shows in the state this year.

We must all remember where our food comes from, because it is so important that we nurture our farmers, put the right legislative processes in place, and that we actually support research and development in this state instead of what we have seen recently—tens of millions of dollars being pulled from the primary industry sector. It is a sector that contributes three times the gross revenue of mining in this state, and it will contribute a lot more than mining for a long time yet, and we need to support it. I support the motion.