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ROAD OR FERRY CLOSURE (CONSULTATION AND REVIEW) BILL

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:07): I rise, too, to speak to the Road or Ferry Closure (Consultation and Review) Bill 2013. I note the comments that have just transpired in this chamber from the member for Little Para. I think what is indicative here is the citycentric mindset of the Weatherill Labor government. They still go on with these announce and defend policies that Premier Jay Weatherill made out were a thing of the past when he was elevated to the role of premier after he knifed Mike Rann, the former premier—well, he got his henchmen to do that job.

It is absolutely disgraceful that we should even be here today discussing this bill. We hear the comments from the other side about why it should not happen. Well, there are plenty of comments coming from this side and in the other place about why this bill is being debated. It is being debated because you have a Weatherill Labor government that takes no notice of country communities. In fact, the notice, as the member for Chaffey indicated, went out that the closure for Cadell was going ahead a week before anyone was going to be told about it. That is just simply, simply wrong.

The Labor government obviously did not foresee the community outrage—not just in the Riverland—that transmitted right through to Adelaide and the greater South Australian area. It just showed that people power can get a result. At the end of the day, the good citizens of Cadell and the surrounding areas, the tourists, the farmers, emergency services, still have access to that ferry service that Cadell. Unlike members opposite, for those of us who live near the river and use those ferry services very often—in fact, when I am out in the electorate, I use them every week—they are vital parts of the road network whether it is shifting wide loads (because sometimes it is the only opportunity for wide loads to come across) or whether it is vineyard operators and harvest operators who operate at all hours. It is vital to shift that equipment, so they do not have an extra hour on their trip in light of the Cadell situation to go from property to property, because they have properties on either side of the river.

It beggars belief that for \$400,000, the government imposes pain not just on the people of Cadell and the surrounding areas but on the people of South Australia. It shows how little understanding they have of the river and how it works. We saw that evidenced in their management of the River Murray throughout the drought in a whole range of areas.

With regard to the ferry, yes, we have been told today—and it is on the public record—that the ferries cost \$5 million per annum to operate and about \$3 million per annum in maintenance, but what is the other option? Build some bridges? Yes, that's great. The last bridge—I think it was Berri in 1997—cost \$17 million and it will be a lot more than that now. If you want to get across the Torrens it costs \$40 million, so I would hate to see what it costs to get across the River Murray.

An honourable member: And that's just to walk across.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, that's just to walk across. I hope it is a fair while to go yet, but when I leave this place, I am going to go into the bridge building business because it sounds extremely lucrative. Mr Griffiths: You can get Ivan to paint them.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, I will get the member for Schubert on as painting crew.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: That's right. What I do want to acknowledge is what happened in the drought, and we saw the work of the ferries working group that was chaired by the Hon. Dean Brown. There were ferries that went out of service and it was the work of that group at a local level, —and I stress, at a local level—that made sure we got those extended flaps put in place so that people could commute from one side of the river to the other. I note that at Wellington they sat there on the bank and Wellington did not quite get there. There was just enough water to keep that ferry going and those flaps are stored somewhere close by at the moment.

Also, in this whole debate, we need to remember what the government was trying to do with regard to the replacement of the five timber-hulled ferries that do need replacement. They have tried to just put the cost back onto local government. That is what they did. They went out to the local government and said, 'Find a way to pay for these ferries or you run the risk of losing them.' They were just going out for blatant cost shifting and, quite rightly, our local councils and our Local Government Association in the Murray Mallee were outraged at this idea.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: Is that right?

Mr PEDERICK: Absolutely, minister. They were outraged that they would have to put their hands in their pocket to pay for something that is a state-based funding arrangement. That is exactly what it is. We have a government that is so urban-focussed that they forget that there is another world out there and that actually some of the urban dwellers—some of those people who do actually live in their seats—travel to the Riverland for a lot of their recreation time and down into my electorate in the Lower Murray.

There has been comment made about what happens with maintenance on the ferry under this bill. I was on a ferry the other day and one of the hydraulic pumps had blown up. The operator said, 'We can still operate it with one,' because there is one on each cable on each side and he said, 'I've got one coming.' I said, 'Well, it won't take long to change that over,' and he said, 'No, it might be 20 minutes.' That will happen quite quickly and obviously instead of trying to fix a hydraulic pump on the ferry, it is a lot easier just to change it right out. That is a common-sense attitude. In no way known will this bill impact on that level of maintenance, I believe.

There are comments about river levels dropping and that sort of thing. We understand in the Lower Murray what happens when river levels drop. I would like to think that through negotiations with the states and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for extra water that it should be in storage. That water has been negotiated through buyback or infrastructure upgrades in the eastern states, and I would like to think that we would never get to the stage that we are in. If we do, that means that all this talk about water for the river has been wasted.

In regard to the ferries, when the minister of the day was working out which ferries they were going to close I wonder whether they just looked at the simple numbers. If you look at the simple numbers, in 2011 the annual average daily traffic count was for Lyrup 258, Waikerie 608, Cadell 98, Morgan 434, Swan Reach 317, Purnong 119, Walker Flat 252, Mannum (upstream) 439, Mannum (downstream) 712, Tailem Bend 400, Wellington 496, and Narrung 81. You can only think that once Cadell was going to get the big hit from the government that Purnong and Narrung were next in line. That is what the government would have done; they would have just looked at the numbers.

They are not even worried about communities, they would have looked at the bare numbers and said, 'Well, it is only this many people using a ferry service, we will just shut it down,' with absolutely no regard for the community, no regard for public service access, no regard for emergency services access and no regard for the good people of the country in the Riverland and around the Cadell area on how to get their children to school. That is why this bill has come into this place and was introduced in the other place. That is why we are debating it here today.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: Not by you. Not by the Liberal Party.

Mr FEDERICK: You will have your turn, Mr Minister. That is the reason we are here today, because we have a Labor government that under its Premier, under its minister, does not know the basic meaning of consultation with communities. They do not have any idea. The simple fact that anyone would come up with this decision just shows how far disenfranchised this Labor government is with the good citizens of this state, especially the good citizens of our country areas.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS (West Torrens—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy, Minister for Housing and Urban Development) (11:18): Well, what an eloquent speech that was! It is hard to follow.

The Hon. R.B. Such interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Well, that is what I was about to say. Isn't it interesting that the party that privatised ETSA without so much as a by your leave are now wanting consultation on road closures after promising full stop never ever ever—

Ms CHAPMAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: That's right, they don't like hypocrisy being brought up.

Ms CHAPMAN: If the minister wants to have a discussion with the member for Fisher, he is entitled to go outside and do it. But he is not, in contributing to this debate, entitled to go off on some tangent.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I will listen carefully to the minister.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: There is a Greek word for this sort of behaviour and it starts with 'h'.

Ms CHAPMAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Now, of course, he is treating you with absolute disrespect in talking about your behaviour in making these determinations. I ask you to get him to either contribute to this debate or alternatively sit down.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Ms CHAPMAN: Relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Relevance? I think the minister is covering—

Ms CHAPMAN: I am not sure how he is going to produce Greek history into the Cadell ferry but frankly it is completely off track.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The Liberal Party was so concerned about the consultation period about the opening and closing of roads that they are supporting someone else's bill. Not one of them has proposed this bill themselves. If they are so concerned about it, why doesn't Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition move this bill themselves? Is it perhaps that they do not have the imagination to do it themselves?

I have to say, given that members opposite support the commonwealth government's ripping of moneys out of urban rail without any consultation whatsoever with the local community, Gawler and Tonsley, I find it utterly hypocritical that a party that supports without any consultation money being taken out of state co-funded infrastructure projects that improve road access—that is okay but, when the government reverses a decision to close the Cadell ferry, they want to entrench prescriptive measures that make it almost impossible to govern.

I think it shows that they are not fit to govern because they are supporting a bill that would make it almost impossible to govern the state's road network, which shows really that they are not interested in governing: they are just interested in opposing. The member for Chaffey was so passionate about the replacement of timber hull ferries in his community: do you know how many times he wrote to me about it leading up to the government's budget? None.

Mr Whetstone: What's this?

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: None.

Mr Whetstone: What's this? It's a letter from me to you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member will stop interjecting, particularly when he is out of his chair.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: After the government made the announcement, the member for Chaffey wrote to me.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Excuse me?

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I look forward to it. The four crossings at Narrung, Purnong, Morgan and Lyrup are on the local government network, and the state government funds those ferries.

An honourable member: So they should.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: The member opposite says so we should. These councils make absolutely no contribution whatsoever to the operation and maintenance of these ferries, not a dollar on local government roads. The government spends \$5.2 million each year on operating ferries and a further \$2.9 million per annum on maintaining them. Indeed, a total of \$82.4 million has been spent since 2004-05 on the maintenance of our River Murray ferries.

We have been accused of not listening to the local community about the Cadell ferry. I would remind members opposite that the government did listen and it reversed its decision. So by the measure they are setting, by listening, we failed; by replacing ferries, we failed; by investing \$82.4 million, we failed. There is no measure that the opposition can set that we can pass, because they are not interested in outcomes: they are interested in opposing, complaining and whingeing. They want to tear this state down. They do not want to see any progress whatsoever on our local road networks. In terms of community consultation, what about Barton Road? Where is the community consultation with the residents of the western suburbs who want to see Barton Road reopened? There is silence from the members opposite.

Mr PEDERICK: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: relevance, number 98. Barton Road has absolutely nothing to do with the ferry, and I think the transport minister understands that Barton Road is well over 100 kilometres from the ferry.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister is talking about consultation and providing an example of it. He is in order.

- Ends-