

APPROPRIATION BILL 2015

TUESDAY 30TH JUNE 2015

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (19:30): It truly is a delight to give an address to the Appropriation Bill 2015, and it is a delight to be speaking after the dinner break which is something we rarely do in these days of so-called family friendly sitting days. As a country member, I do not mind if we sit here half the night, but be that as it may.

One thing in the budget was the lack of attention to detail as far as agriculture spending right across this state. We have a government that for many budgets now—because the revenue generated from the proposed expansion of Olympic Dam is not happening—has had a seven-point plan and then a 10-point plan which included a so-called clean, green reliance on our agricultural regions throughout this state. Yet, we see very little effort as far as funding in the budget.

I guess we should be thankful for small mercies. After hundreds of millions of dollars budgeted for agriculture has been ripped out of the economy over the last several years—and many jobs, probably into the hundreds—I suppose it is something to see that it was a fairly even keel as far as agriculture spending compared to last year, not that that is anything to brag about by any tenure, especially when a government is keen to promote this clean green food but then does not do any work in regard to managing it.

We look at the SARDI budget which has not increased. Research is one of those things that South Australia has been able to pride itself on in past years in the work that was done in the Middle East and across this country in grain technology, dryland farming systems and the like. We have certainly been able to promote things like no-till farming across the world that have made all the difference, especially in years like last year where even though there was not much rain since early July there were still some reasonable crops across the state—no thanks to the state government.

There is very little in the budget for the regions. As was discussed today in question time, the Labor government was going to have 5,000 more jobs in mining, yet we have 5,400 jobs that have gone from mining, so basically that is a net loss of 10,400. Mining is going backwards, agriculture is just holding its own, and then we look at training. This is, I think, one of the major disasters as far as what has happened to funding for training our younger generations for the future. We have a Labor government that has essentially stripped TAFE of funding, staff and facilities over many years and, yet suddenly, the government has had this brainwave. I would say the union standover men have said, 'Fix it. Give us back our jobs.' They have said no more training opportunities for people in the regions who run these regional training providers like Regional Skills Training and the like, we are going to put it back all through the TAFE system. This is after many years of gutting the system. There is no sense to it at all.

Essentially there are 300 training spots across the state for agricultural training that have been whittled down to 20 that will be allocated to Mount Gambier. For the life of me, I do not know how we are going to get anywhere near enough of the younger generation trained in agriculture with this new scheme. I mean, do not get me wrong, I support TAFE, but there is not much left to support. When we have seen independent regional training officers supplied as training and other training across the state, why break something that is not broken? It is just out of control.

We look at things like the increase to the emergency services levy. If you have a home worth \$500,000 you will pay an extra \$205. This comes after a hit of emergency services levy remissions funding of \$90 million and none of that money went into emergency services, by the way, it went into general. Yet, at the same time, the River Murray levy is going off households and that will only save households \$40.

I have had meetings with people and phone calls from people who do not want to pay the River Murray levy, but as the member for Chaffey said today: who is going to pick up the slack? Who is going to pick up the slack with regard to whether

it is salt interception schemes, or whether it is managing the locks and weirs? Certainly, down at Goolwa those barrages will need a multibillion dollar birthday (it will be at least \$1 billion) one day to keep up with making sure that we have a freshwater river right to the mouth. That will be a massive project that will have to be funded from across the country, but this state will have to take its obligations as well.

I fear that now the government has found this bucket that it is calling the emergency services levy it will blame every incident like Sampson Flat and say, 'Well, there's been a big hit, we've got to hit everyone up a bit for another \$20 million to fund it.' What happens if we have five major incidents in a year and we have, essentially, budgeted for one or two? Sure enough, the minister will say, 'Here's another hit to the budget.' It is a land tax, that is exactly what it is.

This comes after the Minister for Emergency Services failed in his bid to amalgamate the emergency services. Why did he even bother? He came in with this approach, made out that he was consulting across the state, got upset when a few of us from this side questioned it, and it all fell through anyway. We saw the head of the MFS get headhunted and get a very handy job overseas when he realised there was no future here. So, we have lost some skillsets and lost a lot of ability. We already have good services in the field, whether it is the SES, the CFS, the MFS and other players in the marine rescue field, and we are essentially back to square one, where it all worked quite well anyway.

If we look at the so-called health reform, this is going to have an effect on rural constituents. Many rural constituents end up in Adelaide hospitals, they could be a third of the clients, or patients, whatever you want to call them, in Adelaide hospitals at any one time. It is interesting, when you look at one of the disasters that is happening with the new Royal Adelaide Hospital, it is with regard to the Enterprise Patient Administration System (EPAS) and also the Oracle Corporate System. Another system that is in strife is the Enterprise System for Medical Imaging (ESMI) program. There is a comment straight out of the Auditor-General's Report, the

supplementary report for the year ended 30 June 2014, which we got a hold of today:

This Report does not revisit the reasons for past delays for these systems but focuses on highlighting risks to meeting revised functionality, implementation deadlines and budget targets and their relationship to the nRAH.

What should happen at the new RAH, I would suggest, is they start going out and getting some bargains on filing cabinets. They are going to need them because EPAS just does not work. It has not worked in hospitals like Daw Park where they have rolled it out and they are still trying to work their way through it. There are a whole range of problems with these ICT projects. I quote again:

Delays experienced have exposed the programs to further scope creep pressure and the need to now manage multiple system implementations concurrently as the nRAH opening approaches.

Well, what a joke. It is just not going to work. Another quote straight from the Auditor-General's Report is:

SA Health's ICT development s, such as the EPAS P rogram , are intended to be a key component in achieving the objectives of the n RAH as South Australia's recent Transforming Health initiative.

As I said, this was trialled in hospitals like Noarlunga, the Noarlunga GP Plus Super Clinic, Aldinga, Morphett Vale and Seaford GP Plus Health Care Centres, SA Ambulance Service's metropolitan headquarters, Daw House at the Repat, Port Augusta Hospital and the Repatriation General Hospital. It is just causing massive problems.

I note that the report says that we are not going to take any notice of the money that has been burnt up before, but that amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars. It is farcical; it is farcical to think that this government has now confirmed it is selling the facilities at Daw Park, supposedly so that it can get a more central location. Well, Daw Park is only 10 or 15 minutes down the road from the centre of the city and in very

pleasant surroundings. You have to wonder what the local member, the member for Waite, has been doing about retaining those services for veterans and others all in one place.

Mr Wingard interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Nothing; exactly right member for Mitchell, nothing. He has just toed the Labor Party line so that he can get that extra 80 per cent and a better pension at the end of it. However, I will leave those comments there.

This health reform is affecting people from right across the state. What will happen in emergency situations? Different hospitals will only be open for different things on different days. If you have a stroke, for instance, they will have to have a scroll come down on the back of the ambulance to tell them, 'Oh, it's Wednesday at 9.30 so we can go here,' or 'It's Saturday at 9.30 so we have to go somewhere else.' It is all about saving money; it is all so that the government does not have to have specialists in every major hospital in the city.

It is already affecting my constituents at Goolwa, who have a different triage process. They cannot get triage at the local medical centre but have to go to Victor Harbor. Then there are issues with what happens up the line, whether it is at Noarlunga or Flinders, etc. So there are going to be a lot of problems as we head into the major part of the health reform, which is the opening of the new Royal Adelaide Hospital, down the track.

Something else I want to talk about is road infrastructure development supposedly improving road safety, sealing shoulders and audio-tactile line marking on high priority roads. Quite frankly there cannot be enough of that, especially on a lot of roads heading out from my electorate through the member for Chaffey's electorate into the Mallee, especially in light of the fact that Mallee rail will be discontinued from 1 August. That will mean that on both the Karoonda Road and the Lameroo-Pinnaroo Road there should be at least two overtaking lanes built each way on each road. Where that has not happened, any parts that have not been widened need to

be because of the extra truck traffic that will be on those roads, just for safety reasons for people who want to overtake.

I note that some work is going to go on with the commonwealth government to improve the Sturt Highway through the National Highway Upgrade Program. I also note—and I have mentioned this here before—that it was a fallacy in past budget years, where \$100 million was spent on the Dukes Highway putting a bike lane down the middle of it and putting in some extra overtaking lanes. It would have been far better to duplicate that highway towards Melbourne, just as the Victorians are coming out further towards Beaufort and Ararat. That would have been a far smarter way to spend that 80 per cent of federal money and the 20 per cent of state money that went into it.

We look at pensioner concessions and the farcical way this government tried to blame the federal government for everything on earth; you would almost think that life itself would not have happened. We had a government that held a gun at the pensioners of South Australia, our most volatile people—

Mr Gardner interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Vulnerable; thank you, Mr Whip. They can be volatile, too, at times. They basically had them on a string over pensioner concessions, which is a state matter. Yes, there was some federal support, but when that small amount of federal support did not happen in other states, those state governments picked it up. But this Labor government has come along with this new concession arrangement, a cheque for about \$200 going to people to make it look like they have done a great job.

I was talking earlier about the jobs crisis. The unemployment rate in South Australia has hit 7.6 per cent. The government was supposed to have 100,000 new jobs by 2016. I am not sure whether it has got above the 3,000 mark, or somewhere in that range, but it is a long way short because there is just not the opportunity. People are going interstate to get jobs. Part of that extends to where we see no major infrastructure

announcements in this budget. What do people do? In the last couple of days we saw that Tagara builders have gone out of business and left a lot of subcontractors, and certainly people from my electorate, heavily impacted at a big building site at Murray Bridge. I just hope they get their money one way or another. The more jobs, the better.

What we will see from this 2015-16 budget is that the state's net debt is estimated to reach \$13.7 billion by 2017. There have been some changes made to the tax regime, but a lot of these will not kick in for three years. Why have they not been fast tracked so that people can make the savings, whether it is stamp duty offsets or payroll tax relief? Why isn't it just brought forward. A lot of these things will not happen until 2018. By that time we will see more people leave this state.

As I said, this is what the Weatherill Labor government should do. We are saying that the government should bring forward planned stamp duty relief, commit to reducing payroll tax immediately, slash the emergency services levy by reversing the \$90 million emergency services levy hike announced in the 2014-15 state budget, commit to building the Northern Connector road, finalise an investigation regarding the Strzelecki Track upgrade, and create a state-based productivity commission.

I would just like to expand briefly on the Strzelecki Track upgrade. That is something that should have been done decades ago. This government really needs to have a good look at it and put a decent submission to the federal government. I guess it will be an 80-20 funding split. What concerns me with whatever is going on in the oil and gas industry in the Cooper Basin is that you can go from Brisbane to Innamincka, to the border, 24 kilometres from Innamincka, on bitumen all the way. When you can do that, it means that either people will base their supplies out of Brisbane or some trucking companies, if they are coming out of Adelaide, will have to do about 1,200 kilometres extra and do the ring route: Broken Hill, Cobar, Bourke, Cunnamulla and then in towards Innamincka that way. I think it is absolutely vital.

We hear this government talk about everything it is doing for the oil and gas industry, but let's get this road sorted out. Let's get it happening and do the right thing for our oil and gas industry in the Cooper Basin, where I spent a couple of years of my life in gainful employment back in the 1980s.

If we look at other issues in the budget, we have the sale of the Motor Accident Commission. This comes from a Treasurer and a government that says, 'No privatisation—no problem, we will just go out and get rid of the Motor Accident Commission, recoup a huge windfall of money and then still run a deficit.' It is just disgusting. It would be alright if things were better in the long run for people right across the state.

I also note that over the forward estimates it is estimated that at least an extra \$800 million of unallocated funding will come to this state (over the next four years) from the federal government. Let's just see where that goes. Let's just see if that does go to useful projects or if, just as has happened in the past, it ends up in the big funnel in general revenue and disappears in wasteful spending. This is not a good budget for this state. It does not do anything for the jobs crisis; it does not do anything for minerals; it does not do anything for agriculture; and it does not do anything, in my mind, for regional South Australia.