

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 11TH FEBRUARY

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:59): I rise today to speak in the Address in Reply debate to the speech by His Excellency, the Hon. Hieu Van Le AO, the Governor of South Australia. I congratulate him on his excellent reading of the speech, but I do note that this is a speech written for the Governor by the government, so let there be no doubt about that.

The first thing I want to look at in my contribution in regard to the Address in Reply is the commentary in the speech about the recent bushfires. Certainly, it was a very challenging time, and I quote directly from the speech:

If there was any doubt about our capacity to rise to a challenge, then it should have been removed in January when we saw South Australians work together in the face of catastrophic bush fires.

We saw many hundreds, probably many thousands of people involved in fighting fires—not just at Sampson Flat and Tantanoola. I also had a small fire at my property on the Dukes Highway at Coomandook where a wheel bearing on a trailer fell to bits and started a fire. I was up here in the city and thankfully the local brigades got there, and local farmers, and controlled that very quickly. I only lost about 150 metres of fencing and a little bit of ground was burnt. My personal experience with fire most recently was very minor compared to some of these other fires, and sadly we saw 27 homes lost. We did not see any loss of life, which is fantastic, and from what I understand we did not have any major injuries. There were certainly injuries sustained by firefighters—whether they be CFS or local people helping put out fires at their own place or their neighbour's property. I commend everyone for what they did.

I also commend the work of the air crews: Aerotech are one of the main contractors in fighting fires and they did a fantastic job alongside the helicopters and we had some planes come over from Victoria. I was listening to some Victorian media over the break, and I think they have access to over 60 planes and helicopters to fight fires. I think it just showed what can be done by people on the ground and that is extremely important, but you do need those air assets and I would just make comment in regard to what happened at Cherryville: I think if those air assets had gone up immediately, no matter whether they were in contract or not—and I heard all those arguments—there would have been a different outcome in Cherryville. I do take my hat off to everyone involved across the board with that fire suppression. It was a fantastic effort to limit the damage to as little as possible. I note that the

government appreciates the support that it received from the commonwealth government and other state governments, and I acknowledge that support as well.

The speech also related to the uncertainty and angst felt by workers at Holden, and people who have recently lost their jobs at Arrium. We have BHP Billiton cutting jobs, and that is not good; it is not good at all. You have to wonder what is going on. I know there are low commodity prices, but we are seeing many, many jobs going. I know there has been some criticism from the other side of this house, from the government benches, about the so-called lack of federal support for Holden, but I have made it clear here before, and I will make it clear again today, it was Detroit that made the decision. They said that no matter how much money was thrown at Holden, General Motors were not going to support it, and that is not good.

It is not good that we will not have a car industry, not just in this state but in this country, after about 2017. I think there will be some vehicles, like the last Holden ute off the line, the last Fords off the line and maybe even the last Toyotas that come off the line in Australia, which may become a collector's item down the track. But, sadly, we are seeing cost of production putting more manufacturing in South Australia out of business. I want to concentrate now on one comment in the speech which says:

It is time to open doors to new opportunities for our priority sectors such as resources, energy and renewable assets.

Yes, that is a great aim and it is what we should be doing. It is what we are already doing to a degree, but why is the rural sector, the primary industry sector, barely mentioned in the speech? I think there is one line talking about premium wine and food, which is trotted out by the government on a regular basis. The amount of money that agriculture supplies to this state, employing close on 25,000 people, is huge. It is time the government really acknowledged what agriculture does for this state.

When the Olympic Dam expansion fell over the government could not fall over themselves quick enough to talk about what our rural industries are doing, our primary industries and our added value industries. I am saddened that they barely rated a mention in the Governor's speech. I certainly support resources, our energy and our renewable assets, but with the cost of resource pricing and other matters, at the moment, they are not the world beaters that they could be into the future.

I am intrigued a bit with the debate around the nuclear issue. I note that after more than 25 years of uranium production it is now time to engage in a mature, robust and informed debate on the future role of the nuclear industry. As also indicated by the Governor, the government will establish a royal commission into the nuclear industry. I think that is a very good idea. I think it is time we had an informed debate. There was obviously heavy debate decades ago when Normie Foster—a Labor man

who helped get Roxby Downs operational, Western Mining at Olympic Dam—crossed the floor in the other place. I think we do need to have this debate.

I am particularly interested in a few things, but one thing is whether there is a potential to value add the potential of uranium and enrich the product and make money out of that in a safe manner, but I also want to talk about burying waste. When we look at our continent, it is one of the most—if not the most—stable continents in the world. I think there are some vast opportunities that we are missing. We continue to store our waste up and down North Terrace, whether it is through hospital surgeries or in hospital basements. Low-level waste is being stored right here in the city, right under our noses, but we do not hear any outcry about that. It actually alarms me that this waste is so close to us and all around us.

I heard an interesting comment one day from one of the staff here at Parliament House soon after I was elected. He made a comment—and it was just a fairly dry comment, I guess. He said, 'We've had some nuclear protests here, and there would be more radiation coming out of the granite that the protesters were protesting on than there would be in a low-level nuclear waste dump.' So, I think it is time for a mature debate. Whether or not it goes ahead, that is up to the process. From what I gather, the new generation reactors are a lot safer and a lot better than any reactor produced before, but that will be up to the royal commission to look at, and I congratulate Kevin Scarce, the former governor, on his appointment to do that work.

Going on through the speech, I note the commentary about Adelaide being the heart of the vibrant state, it being talked about as another of the 10 economic priorities, which was identified by the government, and how the capital city has a critical role to play in South Australia's critical performance. Perhaps it does but, as I indicated earlier, what about our regions? What about our fabulous regions: from Mount Gambier through to the Mallee, through the Murraylands, the Fleurieu, the Clare Valley, around to the Mid North, Far North, Upper North, the West Coast, and Yorke Peninsula. We have some fantastic country that produces great wealth for this state and it does not get recognised enough. I stress that the government needs to take more notice of the benefits of our great state.

Sure, there can be things done in the city. I note that the government has said we must seize this moment to make Adelaide more attractive to businesses. If we had a more attractive business climate perhaps it would work. I note that the government has recently given \$10 million to OZ Minerals to set up an office here. Why should we have to give money so that a company sets up their office here? I think it is great if they are setting up their office here, I think it is absolutely fantastic, but why do we have to give them \$10 million? Would not that \$10 million be better going into the upgrade of the Strzelecki Track to support our mining industries in the Far North?

If this so-called oil and gas hub gets going at Gillman (at the ill-fated Gillman site, which is under a cloud through the ICAC) it would go a lot better to supporting our oil and gas industries by getting on with the upgrade of the Strzelecki Track. I fear, as someone who has witnessed the good road going through Queensland to Brisbane, that too many companies will set up in Brisbane or Toowoomba, as they are already (they have been there for decades anyway), and transport oil and gas supplies from the east. We need to get on with it and get that Strzelecki Track up and going. That is an absolute must. It is a horror story for trucks and certainly if you are driving up there in a vehicle with a camper trailer, as I have done, if you go above 80 km/h you are in strife and you have to go a lot slower than in other areas.

I am a bit intrigued at some of the claims by the government about establishing a carbon neutral Adelaide green zone to make it the world's first carbon neutral city. Listening to 891 this morning, I think they blew that claim out of the water, and talking about that within a decade electric and hybrid vehicles would be the preferred form of transport within the Adelaide central business district. Does that mean that if I come up here in my V8 Holden ute, I have to park it at Glen Osmond and hop on a bike and come through? Some of these plans—

The Hon. A. Piccolo interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I might need your protection in a minute.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will spring to your aid immediately.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you. Members opposite might need to be reminded of what happened to the previous lord mayor, who seemed to have this vision of putting everyone on bikes and riding through Adelaide. Yes, Adelaide is a city, but it is basically the centre of business for everyone else in South Australia, who will commute in their petrol or diesel-powered vehicles and do want to be able to commute around the city in a viable manner so that they can conduct their business. That has to be remembered. To think that within a decade electric and hybrid vehicles will be the preferred form, well, I do not think so. I know lots of countries and jurisdictions are going that way, but I do not think it is going to happen.

There is discussion about the Motor Vehicles Act being reviewed in the Road Traffic Act and the government is going to legislate for driverless vehicles, which will revolutionise transportation in South Australia. I note the discussion about Google having a driverless vehicle. It has not been tested long enough to see if it rates the safety concerns, but there is going to have to be some massive investment if they are relying on phone towers to drive these cars. They will not be able to go too far in my electorate, I can assure you. They might be driverless, but you might be sitting out there like a fish without water, wondering: well, what do I do next? There are a lot of strategies going on with vehicles at the moment, with self-parking strategies, and

some of the high-end cars have some self-driving capabilities, like recognising vehicles in front or the potential of impact. That is all great, but I think we have a long way to go.

I note here also that the government talks about enshrining in legislation an urban growth boundary for Adelaide, which will protect our prime agricultural land, and debates about future growth will occur with full transparency, as demanded by the community. I certainly think that is a reasonable statement, but you do not want to preclude certain areas for development. I have a motion on the table in this place about the potential of developing land in my electorate around Murray Bridge with the Gifford Hill proposal, and other expansion around Murray Bridge could get up to 4,000 to 5,000 homes very quickly within easy striking distance of the city, as Don Dunstan recognised with his Monarto proposal. It is the one thing Don Dunstan was probably on the money with. I will not agree with anything else he did, but he was actually on the money.

An honourable member: It's 40 years too late.

Mr PEDERICK: Well, it is a zoo now and it is a great zoo. We put a few animals in there. Anyway, there is some great potential. I think people need to look beyond the square about where development should really happen and where the options are. I certainly look at my electorate and in areas around Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend where I think there will be greater demand into the future.

Just quickly on that, I note the Peregrine-Shahin proposal for the motorsport park at Tailem Bend, and I wish that proposal all the best. I think that will be a great asset not just for my community but for the state. It will attract people to travel that short 95 kilometres from Adelaide and will be a great boon to add onto what is already happening at Tailem Bend in regard to the driver training, the four-wheel drive training and the drifting.

If anyone wants a little bit of excitement, if they are a bit bored one weekend, they should go down there when the drifters are there, sign the three or four pieces of paper that sign your life away and get in and hold on. It is fantastic, it is unbelievable, so you need to get on. I also note that the speech talks about—

Mr Williams: Use the Fleet SA card, do you Peds?

Mr PEDERICK: No. The speech talks about creating affordable living in our neighbourhoods, well supported by public transport. I note again more commentary about opportunities to walk and cycle around our beautiful city. What about the rest of the state? Public transport is quite a notable issue at the minute in my electorate. It has been an issue I have taken to various ministers over the nearly nine years I have been a member of parliament. It is a hot debate in my electorate at the moment with

Link SA deciding not to have direct runs through to the city at all. They used to have two runs—one morning and one in the late afternoon—straight through to the city from Murray Bridge and back. They have decided to still have seven runs with a connection at Dumas Street at Mount Barker into the Metroticket system.

At first glance, you think that is a great use of resources and that sort of thing, but it is not that simple. Since that proposal has come out and has had a bit of media attention in the last week or two, there are a lot of people, especially elderly people, who are not that keen on switching buses, and I understand that. They are not sure about security, and they are a bit unsure about which bus they change over to at Mount Barker and, certainly on the way back from Adelaide, where they go to get onto the Link SA bus, so it does create confusion. I think, at the end of the day, the government really needs to look at a link to Murray Bridge similar to what I believe happens with the link to Strathalbyn where there is a metro service but a country zone fare in place.

I certainly understand the costs of public transport. It is probably subsidised about 85 per cent by public money, but I think the 20,000-odd citizens of Murray Bridge and all those who surround the town need a better public transport system. I think it is obvious that Link are not that keen on it. They have cut the direct services through to Adelaide, and we really do need to look at a Metroticket system. I understand everything has to be paid for, but it may be a system where there is a country zone ticket applicable for the Murray Bridge to Mount Barker section, and I am happy to have that discussion with the minister at any time.

I look also at what the government is looking at with renewing Housing Trust stock. There will be 4,500 homes within 10 kilometres of the city. I hope they do not forget that the regional areas out there too need Housing Trust stock restored. Certainly but sadly, I have had to deal with a few issues in my electorate where sometimes people do not treat stock as they should and there have to be some quite significant rebuilds. It does sadden me. It is an issue that comes up from time to time. Quite frankly, people need to respect the housing they are being supplied with. Here is the one bit, the one line, about premium food and wine products in our region, and I quote:

The growing prosperity achieved across Asia has also helped more people realise a better quality of life. Demand for South Australia's premium food and wine products will increase in our region.

And that is it! That is the one line in all the pages of the document that the Governor read out for the government. I think there is plenty of growing prosperity across Asia. With free trade agreements to Korea, Japan and one just about signed with China, I think there is huge potential, especially when I look at the potential for the live cattle trade. It is really getting back on its feet.

I know some people do not like that, but it is a fact of life. It supports thousands and thousands of people from Darwin right through to the south of our great nation, right down to South Australia where feed is supplied. As demand grows, I know more and more cattle are sourced from the south—dairy heifers going out of Portland into China and things like that. I think there is going to be great opportunity and we must be able to supply that stock into the future to really get on board.

The speech talks about attracting significant, direct foreign investment. This can be a hot topic at times and I think we do need foreign investment. One thing I learnt during our sustainable farming select committee trip around the state was that some people were quite open that they would love a percentage of perhaps Chinese ownership or perhaps someone else in their properties, so they get that much needed capital in their farming properties so they can be more of a viable system.

It is what is happening right across the state, because some people might not believe it but it is very hard to make a living on what farmers get for their raw products. The costs are high; the costs of machinery are high; the costs of land are massive. It is tough, and I can certainly see why some people are keen to see some foreign investment.

It needs to be managed, and I note that very shortly the Foreign Investment Review Board limit will be brought down to \$15 million and the Australian Taxation Office will be conducting an audit of all properties with any foreign capital involved. I think it is good to just keep track of what is going on, because I am not saying that Chinese investment is entirely a bad thing but we certainly cannot just go to China and buy their land. We live in different ways and we run our countries differently as well.

I note another comment in the speech about a cultural change within the Public Service to attract the volume of investment needed to create new jobs. I think that speaks for itself and I think everyone, whether they are public servants or in the private sector, needs to pick up to make sure we can get this state to be the great state that it is. I note the government is talking about taxation reform. They are open to radical reform, saying nothing is out of bounds. Will we have a land tax on every house, dwelling, business in South Australia? I do not know, but I have a funny feeling that that is where the government is leaning and there will be an interesting debate when that discussion paper on options to reform the state's taxation system is released. In fact, I think it has been released.

I will get to one of the real doozies of the speech and I note that the minister in the house was discussing the other day whether it is appropriate to remain in the Australian Central Time zone, which we have had since 1899. I think this is a commentary that they are using to try to deflect all the issues of the day, whether it is the Gillman land deal or the health reforms but, quite frankly, I think it is a waste of

air. Perhaps this debate may have been necessary in years gone by, many years ago, but the simple fact is, with electronic communication and email, who cares what time it is? You can operate 24 hours a day.

We are only half an hour off beam with the Eastern States. The kids on the West Coast get on buses in the dark now. Next thing, they will have to get up before they go to bed. Now, that is a joke, so do not take that too seriously, but I just think it is a waste of time even discussing it. I know part of the debate is about whether we go further towards Western Australian time and I think there will be opposition from the government side in regard to that but, in real time, that is probably where we need to be heading.

I note there is discussion about the Electoral (Funding, Expenditure and Disclosure) Amendment Act coming into force in July this year, and the Governor talks about greater transparency. I take my hat off now, before that does come in, and salute volunteers. There will be volunteers on all parties—probably more paid people on the other side—that will have to keep up these physical records of finance. I am not saying that is a bad thing, but it is going to need a lot more work from a lot of people to make sure that donations are followed correctly and that the process and transparency is followed directly.

There is talk about the need to review the remuneration of members of parliament. No-one is going to win any prizes talking about that too much—

The Hon. M.L.J. Hamilton-Smith interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, no worries; thanks. It was interesting, in recent years, when we used to be a couple of thousand dollars behind our federal colleagues in the base pay rate, but now we are I think around \$42,000 behind. I will just leave that out there for debate. I know it does not matter what we say in here, people will still say, 'Self interest is a great winner,' and all that, but people do need to be recompensed so that you get good people to represent their state, whether they are from the Labor Party, the Liberal Party or the crossbenchers, and work the many long hours that I know all members work in their capacity as members of parliament.

I noticed discussion around eliminating the anti-democratic practice of preference harvesting. I welcome that debate, because I think that if someone gets elected with 0.5 per cent or whatever ridiculous amount of votes, it is totally undemocratic. I think the public education system certainly needs a lot of work. I note my wife currently works in the system as a library services officer. I note in the speech it states:

...every South Australian child should be guaranteed the attention they need to reach their full potential. This is especially important for children with disabilities.

Absolutely, it is especially important for children with disabilities. Whether it be a physical disability, learning disability, or they have had an abused childhood, they do deserve assistance. My wife was basically employed in the last term of last year to look after one person. That one person was a bag of strife, but sadly it was not the lad's fault on his own. I think it was his upbringing, as he was a foster child.

But, I do think the reaction by the department in assisting this child, in sending out 13 senior Department for Communities and Social Inclusion and Education staff, was over the top. Sadly, there are too many of these cases, and if they are sending 13 heavy staff to address these issues all the time, that is tying up a massive amount of resources. I am not saying it is not a big problem, because it is, but it does need to be resolved in a better way.

Just in the few minutes I have left, as I am running out of time, the speech mentions that the government is looking at investing in 'quality health care for South Australians'. It makes a point in the speech that, 'Every metropolitan hospital and all major country hospitals have recently been rebuilt.' There is a lot of work that needs to be done on other hospitals throughout the regions. I am certainly appalled at the sale of the Daw Park Repatriation General Hospital, because I think that is just a disgrace, and it is an offence to our defence personnel.

I had cause to visit the hospital for a couple of days in December and talked to staff about the failure of EPAS, for a start, but not only that. They were appalled at the prospect of it shutting down. My wife and I have many friends around the place. A couple of them work at the hospital, and they are disgusted. They have long been loyal Labor voters but they might come our way because of this senseless decision by the Labor government in reference to not only our Diggers but the many civilians who go to that health unit, and I welcome that. With those few words, that is my Address in Reply.