

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 7TH MAY 2015

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PROGRAM

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:21): I rise today to speak about the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Program South Australia, and I would like to quote from the Murray-Darling Basin Plan South Australian Implementation Strategy, which is signed off by the Premier and the minister in the other place (Hon. Ian Hunter). I quote from under the heading Regional Development:

The Australian and South Australian Governments have committed significant funding for regional development projects that will stimulate employment and economic growth in South Australia's river communities.

The Australian Government has committed \$265 million to projects in South Australia's River Murray region that will further improve business capacity for innovation, research and development. \$240 million of this funding will support the Water Industry Alliance River Murray Improvements Program, with the remaining \$25 million funding for complementary research and regional development projects in the region.

Communities will also have the opportunity to access funding from the Basin-wide \$100 million Australian Government Murray-Darling Basin Economic Diversification Program.

I want to quote the 21 projects that were picked by the former federal government under Catherine King as the relevant minister at the time. They are:

1. Paringa accommodation facility project
2. Flinders University telecommunications infrastructure project
3. Accommodation and amenities upgrade to Renmark Golf and Country Club
4. Destination Riverland—Accelerating tourism growth in the Riverland
5. Wilkadene tourist venue expansion project
6. Kingston Estate Wines—expansion project
7. Salena Estate Wines—organic focus expansion project
8. Woolenook Fruits—Specialised Citrus 'Easy peel' processing project

9. Water for Nature—Living Water Trails

10. Southern Fishermen's Association & Pipi Harvesters Association—Pipi processing and marketing project

11. Renmark Airport opportunity analysis

12. Lower Murray Flood Plain Project Stage 2:
Implementation of the Lower Murray Flood Plain Land Use
Study and Development Plan Review

13. McLean's Loxton—Pork Farm Development and Feed Manufacturing
Complex

14. Morgan Riverfront Redevelopment

15. Thomas Foods International—Expansion of Beef
Processing Facilities at Murray Bridge

16. Barmera function centre and accommodation upgrade

17. Murray Bridge Conference/Convention Centre

18. Renmark Paringa Council and Destination Riverland—Great River
Walks

19. Murray Bridge Town Centre Revitalisation

20. Murray-Darling Basin Interpretive and Resource Centre

21. Swan Reach Town Hall Redevelopment

It is a fine list of projects but the problem we have in this state is that this government is turning its back on the \$25 million that the federal government allocated three years ago for these very worthwhile projects because the Treasurer and the Premier keep arguing the case, under horizontal fiscal equalisation, that they will lose \$21 million of this money under the GST spread through that process.

That is just ridiculous and it is a furphy and they should not be allowed to get away with it. In fact, I have never seen such political bastardry in this place. These regional communities are going to miss out on this money that has been allocated by the federal government. It is there to give, yet this government is turning its back on it. The reason this Labor government is turning its back on these Riverland communities is because it does not care. It cared when the former member for Chaffey was in the Riverland, when she was a minister in the Labor government, but it does not care when these constituencies are now blue. That is a simple fact. It is an absolute disgrace.

I quote from a letter that the Hon. Jamie Briggs, the federal Assistant Minister for Regional Development, wrote to the member for Frome, the Minister for Regional Development. He said:

Dear Geoff,

I write regarding the South Australian Project Agreement under the Murray-Darling Basin Regional Economic Diversification Program (MDBREDP). As discussed, the Australian government remains committed to providing \$25 million in funding for the benefit of South Australian Murray-Darling Basin communities.

Despite numerous attempts to negotiate the funding agreement, the South Australian government appears intent on playing political games, rather than delivering vital funding for basin communities. If the South Australian government does not negotiate and sign the funding agreement by this year's federal budget, we will have no choice but to reallocate the funding so it can be delivered to those communities in South Australia that need it most.

Members of the state Labor government should hang their head in shame, from the Premier down, for stopping this money reaching our regional communities. Take up the fight in the caucus. This is a huge shame, from the Premier down. It is \$25 million in federal money. There is \$75 million that has been allocated across the other three basin states and they are spending that money on projects, yet the South Australian Riverland and Murraylands miss out. It is an absolute disgrace.

Time expired.