

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 14TH MAY 2015

Regional Development Australia

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:18): I rise to speak to this motion tabled by the member for Goyder:

That this house urges the regional development minister, in conjunction with the state government, to—

(a) provide adequate core funding for the ongoing operations of the seven Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees in South Australia; and

(b) ensure that the operational funding of the RDA network is provided annually on an uncontested basis.

I think that is the core of the issue, because what we saw earlier, and other members have spoken in regard to the 'Brockument' and the deal that the member for Frome cut with the Labor Party, was the simple fact that there was not that continual core funding there for regional development bodies across this state.

I will declare my interest: I was a member of the Murraylands board before I was elected and my wife, before that time, was working with the Murray Mallee Strategic Task Force to get better outcomes for the Murraylands and Mallee. She was certainly the lead in getting the Telstra phone tower at Alawoona.

This money is absolutely vital in regard to all the regional development bodies right across the state. It is interesting to note that on 27 March, after much lobbying from this side of the house and the continual persistence of the member for Goyder, which I congratulate, the member for Frome, the Minister for Regional Development, issued a press release with the \$3 million core funding agreement for three years. That is a good thing, but why did it take a bit of push and shove to get there?

The split goes this way: RDA Yorke and Mid North, \$475,000; RDA Whyalla and Eyre Peninsula, \$470,000; RDA Far North, \$400,000; RDA Limestone Coast, \$400,000; RDA Barossa, \$380,000; the two RDAs that affect my electorate, RDA Murraylands and Riverland, \$450,000; and RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu, and Kangaroo Island, \$425,000. That is welcome funding, but why is it not the core of any government in this state to make sure that this funding is in place? This state does not end at Gepps Cross or the tollgate, and it is about time members of the Labor government realised that.

What we see time and time again, especially with the Premier and the Treasurer, is that they talk about not doing things for a constituency which is not their core constituency. The member for Chaffey rightfully mentioned the \$25 million that looks to be lost from the diversification funding for the Riverland and Murraylands and the government making the point that, 'It is not our constituency. Why should we deal with it?' I remind the government, the Premier, the Treasurer, and all those below them that they are supposedly here to govern for all South Australia and that it should not matter whether seats are blue, red or marginal. It should not matter a darn, quite frankly.

The simple fact is that around 400,000 people live in the regions, and the regions actually supply over 50 per cent of the economic base of this state. The government was so keen to acknowledge the mining sector with the proposed expansion of the Olympic Dam mine, and they are so keen to acknowledge in statements since that did not happen that now we will rely on the clean green environment and the produce from that environment, but it is all talk.

We have a government that goes around the state with their so-called community forums, the community cabinet, but what is the point? It is just a lot of hot air. They do not really care about the regions. It is just to tick the boxes against the 'Brockument'. I just think it is disgraceful how they treat country areas of this state. I have had plenty of conversations with the Minister for Regional Development. He has to work a hell of a lot harder to make sure that we get more funding to the regions right across the state and he has to make his presence felt. Sadly, I do not think the Premier and the Treasurer take too much notice of him. That is not a reflection on him; I just think they do not care. In fact, I know they do not care about the regions.

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: It is not rubbish because we have just lost \$25 million—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I'm on my feet. I know it is hard to tell. It means you sit down. It is unparliamentary to interject; it is unparliamentary to respond to interjections. I would ask all members to observe standing order 142 and keep their noise to a minimum and listen to the member for Hammond in silence. Member for Hammond.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your protection. If what I am saying is rubbish, why, all of a sudden, do I have 21 projects across the Murraylands and Riverland that have missed out on their funding? Why is that?

The Hon. P. Caica interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I won't have it. The chamber is entitled to hear the debate in silence. Member for Hammond.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and if members on the other side want to argue the case, argue the case in contributions—that is what we are here for—get up when it is your opportunity to speak. They are the simple, cold hard facts. That money has gone missing from Riverland and Murraylands communities because of the sheer arrogance of the Premier, the Treasurer and all those on the other side of the house in the government. It is the sheer arrogance of a party that does not give a flying toss about regional South Australia. It is an absolute disgrace that we are losing opportunities for employment and for the spending of millions of dollars in regional communities.

I look at the Gifford Hill project which, over 20 or 30 years plus, would have brought in \$1 billion of income to Murray Bridge and surrounding areas but, no, this state government turns its back. I will be the first one to get up and thank the state government if there is a chance but I think that chance is gone, mind you, because assistant federal minister Jamie Briggs said it was gone if it was not accepted by the federal budget day which was Tuesday.

If that money somehow comes back to those communities in the form of those projects, I will be the first one to get up and thank the government, but they keep playing politics. They keep talking about the GST issues that will happen with that money. What about the nearly \$900 million heading towards \$1 billion of unallocated GST funding that will come to this state over the next four years—and that is a fact? This \$25 million is a very small amount compared to that amount of money.

I will say that is pleasing to see that this money has come into place for these RDAs for regional development. It is absolutely vital that we keep the cohesive work between local government and the other tiers of government as much as possible. However, the trouble is we see this infighting with financial agreements that goes on now, where too many people decide they want to play politics with money that should be allocated to the regions—money that is absolutely vital and money that does not come up every day of the week by any means throughout regional South Australia.

Regional South Australians are due their money as much as anyone else. Just because the main populous lives in the urban areas, does not mean all of the money needs to go there. Yes, regional South Australians use urban areas for education, health, business and a range of activities, but we have to remember that the wealth of this state comes from regional South Australia, whether it is in our food production or our mining capabilities. It is a very sad day when it appears that a state Labor

government talks the talk but will not walk the walk and put a real contribution into regional South Australia.