

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
THURSDAY 26TH MARCH 2015
SUPPLY BILL 2015

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:37): We have made a swap, and I appreciate the tolerance of the member for Mount Gambier. I rise to speak to the Supply Bill 2015. Obviously, this bill is needed to supply money from the Consolidated Account until the budget bill can come through. We have to put into place funding to pay the public servants—

Mr Knoll: And ourselves.

Mr PEDERICK: —and ourselves, which is absolutely true, member for Schubert—so that is why the Supply Bill has to come in until the Appropriation Bill comes through and is ratified by the Governor. This year, I am sure we will be approving the full amount of \$3.291 billion in the Supply Bill. This is absolutely essential to keep the wheels of government turning and, obviously, all the public servants involved.

I guess what concerns me with all things in the budget is that we just seem to be facing cuts and more cuts, especially in regional areas, and yet we see more and more spending in the city. Yes, we have seen some shiny new things, and the Adelaide Oval is a great place to go but came at a huge cost, I believe, to this state.

The forests were sold at Mount Gambier for around \$650 million, when they were really an asset worth \$1 billion at least. Anyone in the field of forestry—my uncle, Uncle Oz, used to work down there for forestry many years ago—would tell you that it was sold far too cheaply, and that is the very reason that a Canadian superannuation firm got involved, because they picked up a bargain: OneFortyOne Plantations. From what I understand, not all is going well with the supply of logs to the local mills, because obviously OneFortyOne can find out when they have an opportunity and they can put logs off-shore and make more money for the company that way if they think fit.

We have had these things come to us, and a lot of people like these developments, but what they forget is the absolute cost. We have a hospital being built for well over \$2 billion when I think a refit of the Royal Adelaide Hospital where it is would have well and truly done the job. There are some excellent units in the current Royal Adelaide Hospital. Yes, it has been classified as a rabbit warren at times, but there are some excellent units in there, and I speak of the burns unit for one, which has done great work for victims of burns.

Then we look at the desalination plant, another item that has cost about \$2.2 billion when we put all the pipelines in place. It is idling along at

about 10 per cent capacity—about 30 million litres of water a day, I think it is—and I think it will have to at least idle along in perpetuity, because from what I understand about desalination plants, if they shut them down all the materials used to get the salt out of the water dry out and you may have to replace a lot of those items. That is another expensive option that could have been half the size; it could have been 50 gigalitres a year instead of 100, but I think that is what happens when people panic.

I want to talk as well about what else has happened in the region, and certainly throughout the Hammond electorate, which is the lack of agriculture funding. We are down to about the lowest spend per annum that we have had for many years in the agriculture sector this financial year. It is down to about \$59 million and, really, we should be putting so much more into agriculture and the research and development. Once, we used to be a powerhouse of research and development in agriculture in this state. We would send teams of people to the Middle East with John Shearer farming equipment and other equipment, showing people in Libya and other places in the Middle East the benefits of broadacre farming practices. South Australia really led the way, and I know we are still doing some work in those areas but it is nothing compared to what it was.

If we do not do the research, how else do we support the mainstay of the economy? Mining has fallen apart, we know the iron ore price has collapsed, gas and oil have crashed—they will all turn around, absolutely. It is what goes on in the background. We certainly saw this when the expansion of Olympic Dam did not go ahead, the government acknowledged—well, they made out—what agriculture does and that agriculture is huge for this state. There are 25,000 people at least employed right throughout the sector to do with food, from the start of the process right through to the delivery of food on the tables at restaurants or in the home. It is a huge workforce and its benefits for the economy are huge.

I certainly think, from my background as a primary producer, that a lot of primary products are undervalued and a lot of especially broadacre farmers from my background struggle to make ends meet, especially with the price of machinery, where a heavy tractor might be \$300,000 plus or a harvester might be \$700,000. Some people might think farmers are millionaires. Well, I can tell you there are farmers with multimillion dollar debts just to put a feed on the table. It is just the price you have to pay for keeping the operation going. There should be a lot more attention paid to our agricultural sector.

Today in question time I noted a Dorothy Dixier from the other side about what the government is doing for pensioners. I do not think they are doing much. They are withholding pensioner concessions. They have made no statement, at this stage, about whether they will pay pensioner concessions on council rates from 1 July. This state government does not

admit the fact that they pay 90 per cent of pensioner concessions, and that it is a state issue; the state needs to pick that up. The emergency services levy has increased to take in \$90 million extra from right across the state, and it is really hurting people. The sad thing about the emergency services levy increase, after they take away the rebates, is that it does not add one extra dollar to emergency services.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: It is; it is a real shame. It would not be so bad if we could see some more upgrades, if we saw places like Rockleigh get their CFS shed, or if we saw more training and more equipment for our 13,000 volunteers. As I indicated in a speech yesterday, they have been taken for granted by this government, especially in regard to cancer compensation. The government had to be pulled kicking and screaming through a select committee to finally award potential compensation for the 12 types of cancer, and they deserved to get that compensation, just like the Metropolitan Fire Service firefighters.

I also want to speak about the Murray-Darling Basin diversification fund. At the moment, I am supposed to be at a meeting about this fund with the Treasurer and his staff—I think they are having a preliminary meeting instead. I got in touch with Jamie Briggs' office this morning, the assistant minister, and he rang me back later and said—and I will put it out there for public knowledge—that, if the state does not allocate this money by 12 May, by federal budget day, he is going to pull it. That is what he is saying. And there is my phone call reminding me to go to the meeting, but I will be 10 minutes late, if that is alright.

It is just a disgrace that politics is being played with this \$25 million, when all communities from the Victorian border right down to the mouth are reliant on the money that was allocated several years ago under the former federal Labor government. When that money was initially allocated, it was stated that the horizontal fiscal equalisation was going to be taken into account in regard to GST payments to South Australia, and it was all going to happen. However, all of a sudden, politics has to be made out of this money, because we have a state Labor government that does not truly believe in the regions. I would like to see the regional development minister stand up and make sure this money is delivered. If it is pulled, it will mean that all those jobs, all that employment, will be pulled out of the Murray-Darling Basin in South Australia, when Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have already got that money on the table and are putting it into programs. It is an absolute disgrace.

It is a bit like this government talking about land tax. You would not talk about it if you were not thinking about doing it—to think they can tax people every year for owning their home. Everyone pays stamp duty, pays heavily on stamp duty, when they transfer a property. Do they think

people can be hoodwinked into thinking that with an annual land tax rate they will be better off? The average rate would be something like \$1,200 a year. It would be a lot more than that for houses that are worth over \$500,000, and rising, and many houses are worth a lot more than that. I think people are smarter than the government thinks they are, if they think they are going to agree to an annual land tax.

We heard the Premier talk today about marine parks and the so-called benefit to this state. All it has done is shift the effort. People from Kangaroo Island have just moved off into other fishing zones, further down Yorke Peninsula in some cases. I believe some have even gone interstate because it has just blocked them out of access to fishing. It has also caused a lot of distress to people in the industry, and I am aware of at least one suicide in regard to marine parks. The way the government supposedly consulted was really flawed. They got people to say where they were fishing, and then the easy answer was, 'Well, that's where we'll put the marine park.' It is just ridiculous.

The car park tax, or the transport development levy, has been talked about today. You can take a lot of those letters out and just call it the car park tax—it is a lot simpler. This has a real impact on regional people who do not have the access to public transport that people have in the city. I note the transport minister is here today, and I had a meeting with him yesterday about public transport in my electorate. I can only hope we will have some improvements into the future. The reality of life is that people from the outer regions drive their cars here. The former lord mayor of Adelaide wanted to have bikes running everywhere. I do not know what he thought we would do—park our vehicles on the edge of the city and then get on a bike and ride in. That is fairytale stuff.

There are a lot of issues around the River Murray and Lake Albert. I have already talked about the diversification fund. There are issues with Lake Albert and salinity, and the government will not even look at the possibility of a connector through to the Coorong. There should be an environmental impact statement taken on what the effect would be if we opened up a connector from Lake Albert to the Coorong so that people could make an informed decision, but the government always comes back and says, 'Any work that's been done has only been done on the Lake Albert side and not on the Coorong side.'

I acknowledge that there are three new ferries under construction. That is a good thing, but it has taken years because the government was trying to fob this cost off onto local government. Now we see that at least two new ferries have more weight restrictions—at Taillem Bend and upstream at Mannum—and it is just not good enough. We need to get on with the job of building two more ferries for \$3 million each. We need to get Bowhill Engineering to get those extra two on the books. They are a great

engineering company in my electorate and they will do the job, as they are doing with the first three ferries.

On health, and the Repat closure, this is a real vote turner that even the health minister has not looked at appropriately. My wife came from the western suburbs from Labor voting stock—

The Hon. S.C. Mullighan: Shame!

Mr PEDERICK: Shame, yes. She's learnt the error of her ways.

Mr Picton: That's what she tells you.

Mr PEDERICK: Let me say that she does a lot of work to get me re-elected. I must say that it has given me a whole new wave of friends in the western suburbs, as if I did not have any before because I am a Port supporter. I know a doctor who works at the Daw Park Repatriation Hospital and some of the health workers are thinking for the first time in their lives that they will be voting Liberal because they are so ashamed.

The Hon. T.R. Kenyon: A doctor?

Mr PEDERICK: Absolutely.

The Hon. T.R. Kenyon: First time ever!

Mr PEDERICK: No, she's a Labor-voting doctor to my knowledge. They are outraged. I talk to people out there and they ask, 'What is going on?' It is the health minister's dream of centralising the Repat. The Repat, where it is, could not be any more central for the rest of the people in the state who do not come from urban areas. It is a great spot, and I think it is more about real estate than health.

An honourable member: That's just not right.

Mr PEDERICK: It is right. He wants to get it closer to the military base at Edinburgh. Military people live all over the place, and it does not take into account that this was put up for veterans. This comes from a government that said in its pre-election material it would never ever sell the Repatriation Hospital at Daw Park.

An honourable member: Never ever.

Mr PEDERICK: Never ever. We did not hear that today when the Premier got up and talked about his so-called achievements since the election a year ago—and I do not think we will hear anything about it either. However, it impacts down the chain. All this centralisation of health impacts on the good people of Hammond especially, as we have seen already, those who live in Goolwa and just outside of Hammond in Yankalilla and Finniss for people to access the health services they had

before they were centralised. The people of Goolwa cannot get triage at Goolwa Medical Centre anymore; they have to get to Victor Harbor, which could take up to a half-hour ride, and I think that could result in some very unfortunate outcomes. There are all these impacts right down the line, and it also affects issues around the downgrading of the Noarlunga Hospital.

On the subject of road funding, I want to talk today about safety fencing. We see so much safety fencing going up that next thing they will be putting safety fencing around the safety fences so we do not hit the safety fences. I am nearly over it. Truck drivers have said to me, 'Where are we going to pull off our trucks because we can't get off the road easily enough. If something is wrong and we have to change a tyre, we have fencing.' There is also concern for motorists bouncing off the fencing and back into the traffic. I see where they should be in some places, but now it just seems ludicrous. Every tree is getting fenced off. Do we have to be such a nanny state? Do we have to legislate for the stupidity of people?

There was a recent accident at Coomandook the other day where a lady from Geelong had been driving all over the road at Keith and they had been trying to get on to the services to pull her up. Finally, she went to sleep and flipped it, and thankfully she did not hit anyone else. When they found her she was standing upright in an upside-down car, but she was all right. So, I think there really needs to be a good look at this work.

In regard to the safety fencing that is going on, why is so much of this work being allocated to Victorian contractors? That is my question. We have perfectly good contractors here in South Australia, like Mike Mason, and I know he is getting some of the work. I have to wonder when this government talks about its so-called achievements, why it does not give more work to state-based contractors instead of funnelling the work interstate and overseas. I would love to say a lot more but I am running out of time, so I commend the Supply Bill to the house.

Sitting extended beyond 17:00 on motion of Hon. S.C. Mullighan.