

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 25TH MAY 2016

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: REGIONAL REPORT

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:31): I rise to speak to the regional report of the Natural Resources Committee, March 2014 to April 2016. I would like to reiterate that this is a well-travelled committee. I think they could certainly shine a light for other committees on what travel needs to be undertaken throughout the state to fulfil their responsibilities. I commend the work of the Chair and her committee in that they do reach out right across the state. They do not mind co-opting members on trips, as I have been able to go on one or two trips with the committee, and I certainly acknowledge that. It really is an interesting committee and it does a lot of good work.

I am not too excited about the NRM levies, but today I want to concentrate on the regional fact-finding visits. I notice that the committee went to Kangaroo Island and that it has been to Millicent and other parts of the South-East with regard to the unconventional gas inquiry. They have been to the Surat Basin in Queensland, and they have obviously toured through my area and the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin NRM region. Part of their South-East tour went to Robe, and they also went to Moomba in the Cooper Basin looking at unconventional gas with the fracking inquiry late last year.

The one trip I was really keen to go on, and I was invited to go on, was the Pinery fireground, Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges and Northern and Yorke tour earlier this year, in March. I thank the Chair and the committee for almost adopting me onto the committee for the day.

The Hon. S.W. Key: We loved having you.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you.

An honourable member: He was a mascot.

Mr PEDERICK: Maybe. It was a good trip. It was sad to see the carnage Pinery had inflicted on so many property owners, especially the guys trying to manage the loose sand properties that you just could not do anything with. On the heavier ground, you could tear occasional strips up through a paddock just to try to slow the drift down, but you could not do anything in the really sandy country.

It is just heartbreaking to see essentially thousands of hectares that were just blowing. We have seen that in recent days with the effects of high winds since that time. I am just hoping that the whole Pinery fireground does get some good ground to get those early crops out of the ground so that we get some cover, and especially that sandy soil that is going to take years, I think, to really get back on its feet.

We saw close calls and how people, just by chance, managed to get a private unit to their house. It was the Angus's place where they just managed to save the house by managing to find a ute that still had a bit of water on the back. The house was already alight and they managed to save it. There are tales of farmer's droving stock during the Pinery fires, just trying to get them out of harm's way. It is truly inspirational to see what people do, not just to keep their livelihoods alive, but to look after that precious stock and try to get them into a safe place. It certainly is going to be a challenge for many farmers in that area. They are going to be struggling for a while.

I note the committee also went to the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM region, but I am a bit intrigued with the Premier actually feeling that he had the need to write to this committee to—

The Hon. S.W. Key interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: I know he wrote to all committees, absolutely, but I am just expressing my support again for the work this committee does throughout the regions. I will read the letter into *Hansard*.

Dear Ms Key,

Following the State Election of March 2014 an agreement was reached with the Member for Frome to support stable and effective government.

Part of that Agreement includes the Charter for Stronger Regional Policy.

The Charter outlines the importance of regional South Australia to the strength of the State as a whole and its aim is to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the regions in policy and legislative decision-making.

Accordingly, I am seeking the support of your committee to convene a meeting in a regional area that provides a forum for South Australians residing in that area to put forward their views on matters within your committee's purview.

Our ambition is that, over the course of this Parliament, the combined efforts of the committees lead to a deeper and more widespread appreciation of the matters affecting regional South Australians for all Members, with at least one forum held each year.

Should you have any enquiries about this matter please contact Mr Jadyne Harvey, Principal Adviser, in my office on telephone...

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Jay Weatherill

Premier

Well, it is nice to write letters to committees, but to my mind this government—and I am not making a reflection on the Natural Resources Committee now—does little in reality to support regional communities. We saw it with it not accepting the \$25 million from the diversification fund, and we have seen it in recent times where the Premier tried to defend not spending road funding money in Liberal electorates.

In the electorates of Goyder and Flinders, in both cases \$400,000 was lost because \$100,000 in each electorate was not put up in regard to these road funding projects—alas. But we see that in the seat of Giles, right next door to the seat of Flinders, an identical costing project was funded.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, funny about that. How does that happen? Why should the electorates of Chaffey and Hammond have to miss out on \$25 million just because they are Liberal seats? That is the question I put to the parliament. We have an area, mainly in the seat of Chaffey but some of it goes through my electorate, where the rail is closed throughout the Mallee. The roads will need massive work, including shoulder sealing and overtaking lanes, to protect the safety of the good people of the Mallee and surrounding areas in their travels on these roads.

I think the fact that the government did not accept money for the regions when it was there shows the sheer hypocrisy of the Premier. I think it is absolutely disgraceful that this money has not been accepted. Yet we see, when it suits the Premier, the Treasurer and the rest of the government, they will spend the money in the seat of Giles. I think that, if that road project got money, that is great, but why is it turned back on the burghers of Chaffey, Hammond, Goyder and Flinders? The government will not fund river link projects or road projects, and I think that is politics at its worst.

The Premier does not support regions, which I think are the last shining light in this state (while we are all always in this place, I note the Minister for Agriculture is here today). Agriculture is one of those shining lights. It has its struggles—we have a struggle with dairy at the moment—but agriculture is putting billions into this state and it needs to be recognised for its contribution. I think it brings in around \$20 billion.

We need real recognition. We do not need the money that has been ripped out of it over the years, but we need support for the regions as a whole. The Premier cannot write these bland letters, supposedly keeping up his charter with the member for Frome. In fact, I do not think it is worth the paper it is written on.

In closing, I commend the Natural Resources Committee for the work it does around this state. I will have more to say with regard to the natural resources management levy at a later date, but I appreciate the regional tours, especially those I have been able to attend as well.