

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 4 May 2006

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Hammond, I remind members that it is the member's maiden speech and I ask members to extend to him the usual courtesies.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your appointment. Before launching into my speech, I wish to add my compliments to those already given to Her Excellency the Governor for the speech with which she opened this 51st Parliament of South Australia and for the work she undertakes in this state, and for the manner in which she undertakes her role. I had the pleasure of attending a local function in Murray Bridge where Her Excellency officiated at the launch of an aged care facility. Her presence was warmly welcomed by all.

I also congratulate the new members to the chamber on both sides. I especially congratulate the new members on our side of the chamber—the members for Goyder, Unley and Finnis. I am sure we will all make valuable and productive contributions to this parliament and serve the people of our electorates to the best of our abilities.

In 1840 my great great grandfather, William Pederick, made a decision to leave the family farm in England to head to the new country of Australia. Hearing that a ship was about to leave Plymouth for Australia, he asked his wife whether she would be willing to go to Australia, to which she readily assented. William went to find his father to borrow a horse to ride to Plymouth to arrange passage. His father was away at the time and his mother said to him, 'Don't think of anything so foolish. You won't get a horse from here if that is what you wish to do.' William was determined and walked the 30 miles to Plymouth and made arrangements for the voyage. In 1840 William and his family arrived at Glenelg and established a bootmakers shop and a small farm at Plympton.

In about 1850 William and his two eldest sons sought their fortune in the Victorian goldfields and were successful in finding gold. It was in 1853 that

the Pederick family purchased their first farm in the Angle Vale area—an area where the family farmed until 1961. It was in this area also that the family of the Hon. John Dawkins established themselves, and the families have remained in contact through the generations.

Since settling in South Australia my family has been forced to relocate on two occasions due to land acquisitions as a result of the extension of defence activities in the Northern Adelaide Plains region. As a result of the latest land acquisition in 1960, my parents relocated from Angle Vale to Coomandook in the Upper South East, where my family has since farmed, specialising in prime lamb, beef, wool, premium grains, legumes and oil seeds. I am a fifth generation farmer in the Pederick line.

I was born at Calvary Hospital and have lived in the Coomandook area all my life. I completed year 10 at Coomandook Area School before boarding in Adelaide to attend Urrbrae Agricultural High School for one year. Indeed, it was as a student at Coomandook that I undertook a tour of this place in the 1970s, with the then member for Mallee, Bill Nankivell. It was also my good fortune to have Dorothy, the wife of the former member for Murray, Ivan Wardle, attempt to teach me the piano. I was thrilled to receive a letter of good wishes from Ivan Wardle in the week preceding the election. Ironically, the same defence force that caused my family to leave the Angle Vale area has lured one of my younger twin brothers from the farm to serve his country for the past 20-odd years.

My family has a strong history of serving its country in the defence forces: my great uncle served in the First World War, two uncles served in the Second World War and my younger brother served as a peacekeeper in Rawanda and, more recently, in Baghdad. I am very proud of what my brother Chris has achieved, both personally and as a member of the Australian Army. My other three siblings—Heather, Graeme and Nicolle—enjoy success in a range of occupations, generally related to primary production, as a result of a disciplined and Christian upbringing on the family farm. My father remains on our family farm—a stalwart of the Coomandook community and church.

In 1991 I took over the management of the family farm. My wife Sally joined me on the farm in 1999 and not long after we were blessed with the birth of our two sons, Mackenzie (Mack for short) and Angus. Our five year old son Mack started school at Coomandook Area School at the beginning of

this week, which was a proud moment for me, as this is the school I attended for all but one of my school years. Before we know it, our little bloke Angus will be attending the Coomandook Kindergarten, followed by school at Coomandook Area School.

Although I have worked most of my adult life on the family farm, I have also worked in the state's remote northern gas field, and as a shearer for many years throughout the Mallee and the South-East and as a hay contractor in Western Australia. I have seen many changes in farming in what may be considered by my father as my short time in farming. I cannot imagine the changes my father has seen in his 80-odd years. He often tells tales of his time ploughing paddocks behind a team of horses. But, on the other hand, he was the hardest to budge from behind the wheel of the 300 horsepower Case tractor we used to own.

I have seen production levels increase to huge levels, with no real financial benefit to the farmer due to high input costs and low commodity prices. I have seen families split up due to financial stress or leave the land out of sheer exasperation. Being a farmer today is no walk in the park. Gone are the days of the landed gentry and the new Statesman in the shed. Times are tough in the bush, and people are hurting. The tough will ride it out and prosper, as cyclical history tells us that farming will once again attract the financial returns it deserves. I have been involved in local community activities, such as football, tennis, CFS—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: —yes, Borders—the Bachelor and Spinster Ball Committee, the Hall Committee and, more recently, the School Governing Council.

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Go, the Sandblasters! I was involved for many years in South Australian Rural Youth, as a member and on the executive committee, and I continue to enjoy the many long-term friendships through this once extensive network and the benefits that this training has brought me in my personal and professional life.

When I was in my twenties, I was fortunate enough to take part in a rural youth exchange study tour of America and Canada. This tour certainly opened

my eyes to the opportunities available in primary production and the many experiences overseas travel offers.

My involvement with industry organisations has contributed to my interest in politics and community leadership. I have been a member of the Murraylands Regional Development Board, the South Australian Agricultural Bureau, the South Australian Triticale Growers and Marketers Association, the Kondinin Group, and the South Australian Farmers Federation. My membership with these organisations has allowed me to take a committed interest in local initiatives, including sustainable regional business development and education, as well as employment growth and economic development for the Murraylands region; landcare; best practice farming techniques and primary production technology.

While I have leased the family farm, my family roots are in farming, and I will always be supportive of those who work hard to make a living off the land. I am a proud community member, and I look forward to my sons having the same opportunity that I had growing up in the region—a quality education at the Coomandook Area School, lots of space to run wild, and a warm and protective community in which to live.

Being a member of the Liberal Party has been very important to my political career. I support the Liberal Party's beliefs, including the innate worth of the individual and the right to be independent, to achieve, and the need to encourage initiative and personal responsibility, as well as the equality of opportunity, with all Australians having the opportunity to reach their full potential in a tolerant community. I believe in freedom of choice and the encouragement of a robust economy so that all may enjoy the highest possible standards of living, health, education and social justice.

Unlike the former member for Hammond who, in his maiden speech—
An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: —you know him—promised to make improvements and not friends; to make decisions through consultation, not confrontation; to promote understanding and insight, not antagonism and acrimony; and to represent the people, not institutions or organisations; and who failed miserably during his last term in office to meet any of these promises—I promise to be honest, respectful, forthright, and to represent the wishes of the people of Hammond. I intend to do this in a manner that is acceptable, and

supported by my constituents, that is, like the old BP advertisements used to say, as a quiet achiever, without the flowery and verbose dissertations often delivered in this chamber.

The electorate of Hammond is built upon a strong, proud, independent, conservative community, a community that would rather work hard and strive to survive than complain loudly and wait for handouts, and a community that has already been dealt any number of bad hands and still comes out a winner. That is the community in which I have grown, continue to live and intend raising my family, and where hard work and persistence rewards those who persevere. It is an absolute privilege to be able to represent these people of Hammond. Many people I know or have met have asked me why I wanted to enter parliament as the member for Hammond. The answer is easy: I did not believe that the people of Hammond were being represented appropriately. I chose to lead by example, that is, I was not happy with the representation Hammond had in parliament and decided to do something about it. Again, that is the Mallee way of doing things: work hard and fight for a positive future.

The electorate of Hammond was named after Ruby Florence Hammond, 1936-1993, who spent many years working for the advancement of the state's Aboriginal population. Ruby was the first Aboriginal person to stand for federal parliament in South Australia, and her premature death brought a close to a remarkable life, a life that had deeply touched many Aboriginal people on the path towards reconciliation.

The Hammond electorate has been extended and retracted on a number of occasions. As an example, the electorate of Albert from 1956 to 1977 included only about half of the current electorate of Hammond, taking in much more of the Upper South-East region, which my respected colleague, Mitch Williams, now represents.

Mr Williams: And very well.

Mr PEDERICK: And very well. A name change to Mallee and a boundary change in 1976, which took effect from 1977 to 1985, meant an extension to the north into what we call the Northern Mallee, and an extension to the south, which meant the townships of Kingston, Robe and Beachport were included. Further name changes have included Murray-Mallee, Ridley and, finally, Hammond. With these name changes came a number of

boundary changes to the north, south and west. Luckily the South Australian-Victorian border is the eastern boundary of the electorate, or I expect that boundary would have been extended and retracted as many times as the others.

The current boundaries of Hammond are as follows: to the west, the River Murray, Bremer River, Finnis River and Lake Albert, whilst in the east, the district extends to the Victorian border. This large rural electorate, covering over 17 000 square kilometres, includes the expanding townships of Murray Bridge, Strathalbyn, Tailem Bend, Karoonda and Lameroo, and the local government councils of the Rural City of Murray Bridge, District Council of Karoonda East Murray, Southern Mallee District Council, and parts of Coorong District Council, Mid Murray Council and Alexandrina Council. With these boundary changes has come greater diversification of cultures. The Hammond electorate now encompasses a number of primary industries including dryland agriculture, irrigated horticulture, intensive animal production, viticulture and, of course, the dairy industry.

Statistics from the Murraylands Regional Development Board, which covers a slightly larger area than the Hammond electorate, show that while the Murraylands comprises only 2.7 per cent of the available land for primary production in the state, it produces: 30 per cent of the state's dairy, and 50 per cent of the total value of milk products; 35 per cent of the state's pig production; 22 per cent of the state's chicken meat production; 40 per cent of the state's onions; 40 per cent of the state's potatoes; 30 per cent of the state's carrots; 30 per cent of the state's glasshouse-greenhouse vegetables; 40 per cent of the state's olives; and boasts over 50 different horticultural crops.

In addition to primary industries, manufacturing and processing industries are expanding at a rapid rate in the region as opportunities to value-add are realised. Over \$900 million of primary product is produced or processed in the Murraylands region on an annual basis. The region boasts the state's largest export abattoir for the processing of red meat, including lamb and beef.

Furthermore, state-of-the-art technology has been employed in the recent establishment of pork abattoirs in the region. The lack of unskilled labour in the region may be the only obstruction to further expansion. However, importation of labour from other regions, interstate and overseas, has meant

that delays to expansion have not occurred to any great extent. The Murray Bridge and Monarto areas are now highly sought after by city-based businesses looking for more space to operate within striking distance of Adelaide. The number of businesses focused on engineering and light industrial manufacturing has grown substantially within the region.

Tourism is a growing industry in the region. The River Murray is a huge lure to the region, with many visitors utilising our award-winning houseboats, cruising on historic paddle steamers or partaking in water sports such as water skiing or fishing. Monarto Zoo continues to be a major drawcard for the region, attracting nearly 100 000 visitors annually. The region's tourism marketing board has been highly successful, winning numerous state tourism awards and being inducted into the National Tourism Hall of Fame for winning three consecutive national awards for tourism marketing. Visitors to the Murraylands region spend an estimated \$71 million a year.

Our rurally based communities have continued to suffer from withdrawal or regionalisation of health services, and obstetric services are limited to large regional centre hospitals. If families are located some distance from these facilities, quite often the mother-to-be is forced to find accommodation close to the hospital to await the new arrival or take the risk of making a long drive when the time finally arrives. Limited aged care facilities have caused grief to many families as older family members are forced to take a placement in a town or rural city located some distance from the family and the family property.

Mental health support is under-resourced in Hammond. Suicide is on the rise, and Hammond is no different from anywhere else. Our communities have seen the loss of many members, including young people with what seemed to be the world at their feet. These very important services cannot be provided on a once-a-month or travel-to-Murray-Bridge basis. It is vital that our state continue to provide adequate aged care facilities, mental health and community health services within and accessible to our communities. The health and wellbeing of our communities also requires support with adequate primary health programs. Our state needs to find better ways to attract and retain health professionals in our regional areas, whether locally trained or from overseas. We need to be more proactive in attracting the right people so that communities receive a decent level of health care.

The electorate is lucky to have a range of both private and public education facilities, and I applaud the teaching staff who have made a commitment to work in our region. Our schools are the hub of our communities, often housing play group, kindergarten and the community library. It is important that we keep these high level facilities available to our community members and encourage their continued use. The huge maintenance backlog in our public education facilities is of concern. This must be addressed immediately to ensure the safety of our students and the quality of the services being provided. The majority of roads within the electorate of Hammond are in need of major upgrade, requiring a large injection of funds. There needs to be greater road funding provided by all levels of government.

Traversing Hammond are two of the main road transport routes in this state: the Mallee Highway, linking South Australia to the eastern seaboard, primarily Sydney and Brisbane; and the Dukes Highway, linking South Australia to south-eastern Australia, primarily Melbourne. It is imperative that major road upgrades in Hammond include a dual carriageway from Tailem Bend to the state border near Bordertown, and realignment and rebuilding of the Mallee Highway from Tailem Bend to the state border near Pinnaroo. The development of a north-south freight corridor that will bypass Adelaide and allow greater freight linkages between the south and South-East with the Mid North must be a high priority for this state. The region is perfectly situated to become a future logistics and transport distribution hub for South Australia, due to its easy access to road and rail infrastructure, linking the state to the eastern seaboard.

The impact of crime is an ongoing issue for all South Australians. It is time to get tough on perpetrators of crime. Petty crime, such as vandalism and break-ins, are clearly affecting our way of life and causing some older and less agile community members to be prisoners in their own homes out of fear for their personal wellbeing. Business owners and operators are sick of paying huge insurance premiums to cover the cost of crime, and our communities are left shaking their heads at the low penalties being handed down to perpetrators of serious criminal offences. It would be encouraging to see a greater presence of police in the Hammond area, with a proactive approach to crime instead of the current reactive trend. The River Murray is undoubtedly the lifeblood of the electorate of Hammond, as well as the whole of the state.

Strategies that return environmental flows and reduce salt loads to the river system need to complement those that support sustainable production. Protection of the River Murray and the industries and communities it supports must be paramount to our state; and, as a state, we must oppose the Victorian government's plans to establish a toxic waste dump proposed within 14 kilometres of the river.

Our irrigation-based industries contribute enormously to our state's budget and must be protected and complemented by legislation and through the implementation of strategies that focus on sustainable production. Utilisation of ground water resources for irrigated horticulture in Hammond has also caused concern to those seeking to use this resource for stock and domestic purposes. A balance needs to be struck to ensure that all users gain without depleting the resource too highly. Future strategies that are planned to minimise impacts on the River Murray, which have the potential to impact on reliant communities, need to include social impact studies prior to commencement. Too often the impacts on the communities are not considered, considered too late or not managed appropriately, causing huge and often lifelong impacts, such as suicide, family breakdown and the like. The impact to our regional dairying communities as a result of the rehabilitation of the Lower Murray swamps has been a primary example of how not to do things in the future. Shared responsibility is the way forward for the River Murray. All users—whether it be for economic gain, domestic use or recreational purposes—need to take responsibility for the way in which they use the water.

Lack of infrastructure is limiting development in Hammond, while primary and secondary production, as well as manufacturing, are moving ahead in leaps and bounds in Hammond. Some segments of these industries are being constrained due to the lack of appropriate power and water infrastructure. Mobile telephone and internet services in the region are patchy and unreliable to say the least. Hammond is under threat of lagging behind the rest of the state and nation when it comes to product marketing, business management, education and risk management due to the restrictions these poor services cause. Lengthy service failures, including electricity and telephone failures (sometimes lasting up to 24 hours), are common and cause major disruptions to business and families and are a huge safety concern. In Hammond we have

two major mining enterprises about to commence, one at each end of the electorate and each having individual circumstances that need to be handled carefully to ensure the retained health and viability of the surrounding communities.

In the first instance, the proposed open cut Australian zircon mineral sands mine in the Mindarie region needs to be managed, and the land rehabilitated appropriately to ensure that farming soils are not degraded or made more susceptible to wind erosion. At the other end of the electorate is the below ground Terramin lead and zinc mine at Strathalbyn. This proposed mine is located 1.7 kilometres from Strathalbyn schools. I strongly believe that we need to undertake blood lead level testing in children to ensure that we understand baseline blood lead levels and have the greatest opportunity available to identify any potential changes. I have been assured that the likelihood of lead poisoning is negligible; however, the community has legitimate concerns that must be addressed to ensure peace of mind. Also, environmental concerns need to be addressed, such as dust, noise and waste management, to ensure that the surrounding natural resources are not negatively impacted. Both these proposed mining ventures have the potential to bring economic gain to nearby communities and the electorate through greater work force opportunities and increased spending ability.

Through the process of converting perpetual land leases to freehold for the purpose of retaining the ability to sell or transfer the land, leaseholders are finding that they are now required to surrender significant portions of their leases to the government, often losing their best production land and valuable water frontage. Leaseholders are also expected to foot the bill for the survey costs, often running into thousands (and sometimes tens of thousands) of dollars. Many of these leaseholders have been managing these areas, spending considerable time and money undertaking works for both production and environmental restoration purposes. These areas when returned to the government would be retained by the Crown, with pest management processes being managed by natural resources management boards.

I take issue with the freeholding process now being implemented and the cost and personal impact it is having on Hammond community members. I also have concerns that the management of these tracts of land will diminish

markedly once ownership is removed from the original leaseholders. This will cause more environmental degradation and more cost to the state.

The management of leases associated with the historic Milang shacks is also causing great angst for many Hammond constituents. The Milang shacks, for those not familiar with them, are a collection of small holiday shacks that were built in the mid-1900s. The shacks are very small and were built closely together, which encourages a community type effect during holiday periods. Originally there were no sewerage systems plumbed to the shacks, and the holidaymakers would head off to use the nearby caravan park ablution blocks. A septic tank effluent disposal system recently has been built to service the Milang shacks.

Many shack leaseholders have made major improvements to their shacks and second, third and fourth generations are now enjoying the benefits of holidaying in the Milang region. This idyllic setting is now under threat. Current arrangements do not allow the transfer or sale of shack leases, which means termination of the lease upon the death of the leaseholder. Once this occurs the shack is demolished, which results in the loss of tradition, culture and history for the family, Milang, the region and our state. A moratorium needs to be introduced immediately to review the freeholding processes that are being implemented and to ensure that the best outcome is gained for all.

Regional bus services are suffering the impacts of cost savings. Recently, the public bus service in Murray Bridge was scaled back considerably to 'dial-a-ride' like arrangements that do not suit the primary users of public transport in Murray Bridge, such as the aged and welfare dependent. I have committed to personally review this system over the next 12 months to ensure that the most appropriate and user friendly systems are in place for our communities. I will also be taking a keen interest in the progress of our transport systems in the wider Hammond region to ensure that our rural based communities do not suffer due to distance.

For any number of years now landowners with properties adjoining crown land (such as conservation parks) have had their properties, lives and livelihoods threatened by bushfires raging out of control and spreading onto their properties from those adjoining crown lands. Through the adoption of best practice methods and legislative enforcement, land-holders have undertaken practices such as the building of firebreaks to protect their

properties and lives. The recent bushfires started by lightning in the Ngarkat Conservation Park raged out of control onto adjoining properties due to insufficient management of the fire fuel within the park boundaries. Furthermore, fire management practices undertaken by national parks staff have caused long-term and sometimes irreparable damage to private property.

The state needs to take a better approach to managing bushfires and the risk of damage to property, life and livelihood as a result of bushfires originating on crown land. Management measures such as controlled burn-offs and development of effective firebreaks need to be implemented to minimise risk and protect adjoining property. I believe these measures need to be undertaken in consultation with adjoining landowners to ensure that regionally appropriate management practices are used.

My vision for Hammond is for vibrant and prosperous communities that retain and build on the strength and independence of their forebears; that our primary producers are rewarded for their hard work and perseverance; that all opportunities for industry development across the board are realised through business support and infrastructure expansion; that regional and rural based communities have access to high quality health, aged care, transport and educational services; that our youth are retained and that we attract others, such as health and education professionals; and that we work cooperatively to achieve a positive and proactive future.

In finalising this, my maiden speech in parliament, I wish to thank my father, Bob, for his understanding and his support. I am not sure that he was entirely convinced that leasing the farm and heading for parliament was such a good idea. With the utmost respect, I would like to thank my wife, Sally, for her ongoing assistance, friendship and belief in me. I know that she will always be my greatest supporter, and also my greatest critic. I thank my sons, Mack and Angus, for always having a smile for me, and I thank my friends for their steadfast support and camaraderie.

I also take this opportunity to thank my in-laws, Dorothy and Dick Abernethy, who, whilst having a different political viewpoint to me, always looked after our boys so that Sally and I could campaign effectively over the past 12 months.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: We might be battling; I think they voted for Leon.

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: I will introduce you to them. I would also like to thank my campaign manager, Norm Paterson, and my committee, including Jeanette Eckert, who is here today; a group of dedicated people undertaking a sometimes thankless task. The commitment of this team of volunteers, from a variety of backgrounds and all with valuable experience, was extraordinary, highly admirable, and a true asset to the Hammond campaign.

I wish to thank my mentors, my colleagues and the Liberal Party of South Australia. In particular, I would like to thank David Ridgway, Terry Stephens, Michelle Lensink, Caroline Schaefer, John Dawkins, Mitch Williams and Martin Hamilton-Smith, as well as federal members Patrick Secker, Alexander Downer, Senator Jeannie Ferris, Senator Amanda Vanstone, Senator Alan Ferguson and Senator Nick Minchin for their help and guidance during my campaign. I would also like to acknowledge John Burston and the team at Liberal Party headquarters for all their efforts and assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my community and my constituents for having faith in me. I am greatly honoured that they elected me to represent them as their member of parliament in the House of Assembly. I look forward to building a positive future for Hammond and serving the electorate to the best of my ability. As my good friend David, who is in the audience today, said on the steps the other day, 'It's a long way from picking rocks and shearing sheep.'