



‘Dare to be different’ MPs urge producers

By MELISSA
KEOGH



Local producers must avoid relying on wine grapes as the be-all and end-all of the region’s economy and start thinking “outside the square”, according to a group of Liberal MPs.

Two members of the SA Liberals’ newly established Regional Affairs Committee (RAC) descended upon the Riverland last Thursday before visiting a variety of local businesses, including Nippy’s, The Frames, and Syntec Diamond Tools.

Among those present were Liberal Member for Hammond and committee chair Adrian Pederick and MLC John Dawkins.

Member for Chaffey Tim Whetstone, who is also part of the committee, was absent from the tour due to his instalment in State Liberal Leader Steven Marshall’s latest shadow cabinet.

Mr Pederick said it was time local businesses considered alternate ways of lifting the local economy.

“People need to do something a bit different and find a niche (market), so they’re not just relying on wine grapes, for example,” he said.

“Wine grapes are heavily over-produced throughout the state and the country.”

Mr Pederick said the establishment of Paringa’s multi-million dollar accommodation facility The Frames stood as an example of locals investing in ideas that “are a little bit out there”.

“We need to be a bit innovative and a lot of people are already finding that they can’t rely on what they’ve been doing for decades upon decades,” he said.

“People that diversify are going to be the winners.”

During the visit, the MPs were also taken on a tour of Parker’s Cod Farm in Renmark, where owner Brenton Parker explained the practices surrounding farming Murray cod and silver perch.

“It’s fantastic to see something like the cod farm, which has evolved from a backyard thing and is now going to become so much bigger,” Mr Dawkins said.

“When you see operations that don’t rely on massive irrigation allocations – it increases the sustainability of a region.

“The Riverland has been singing out for diversification for a long time.”

The RAC aims to work alongside Minister for Regional Development Geoff Brock and hold him accountable via commitments to regional South Australia.

Mr Pederick said he was “concerned” with Mr Brock’s \$39 million funding commitment

towards regional South Australia.

“We had \$139 million on the table going into the election and I think he (Mr Brock) short-changed the regions across the state,” he said. “My biggest concern is that all regions get some equity and not just (Mr Brock’s) electorate of Frome.

“He’s put in a huge wish list for Frome, so we want to make sure that all areas get access to regional development funding.”

Both MPs agreed that continued after-effects of the drought and a declining population due to a lack of employment opportunities were the Riverland’s greatest threats.

However, they both commended the region’s resilience.

“There’s a resilience here that has really been tested,” Mr Dawkins said. “When you see the likes of the cod farm and other places we’ve visited, it shows that resilience pays off.”



Citrus Australia SA Region chair Con Poulos (left) and AgriExchange divisional manager Richie Roberts (right) in Renmark with Adrian Pederick and John Dawkins.



John Dawkins (centre) and Adrian Pederick (right) with Syntec Diamond Tools managing director Dennis Cliff.



Parker's Cod Farm owner Brenton Parker (left) took members of the SA Liberals' Regional Affairs Committee John Dawkins (centre) and Adrian Pederick on a tour of his facility last week.

PHOTOS: Will Slee