

Funding cuts (Appropriation Bill) October 26, 2006

Mr Pederick (Hammond): In deference to the time and the fact that we have had a gruelling week or so in estimates, I will be brief. I wish to speak briefly on a few budget lines that affect the seat of Hammond, one of which is the cuts to aquatic centres. The government will say that they are only proposed cuts, but the message getting to me is that aquatic centres across the state will lose their funding. There are eight centres across the state, one of which is based in Murray Bridge, and 180 schools come to this aquatic centre for various water sport activities and training. Four thousand students from across the state come there. If we lose this, we will lose a vital part of water safety.

Another cut is the Be Active program. The government is cutting it out and putting in a little Mickey Mouse program just to say that it is still doing something. This is sheer arrogance by a government whose health minister says that it is concerned about health and the obesity of children. It is a slap in the face of reality as to where we are going with this. The government talks about food labelling, etc. If our kids could be more active and had an incentive to be more active, they would be a lot fitter.

In terms of the branched broomrape eradication program, only 360 hectares of branched broomrape was treated for eradication out of a quarantine area of 193 000 hectares. What does the government do? Over four years it will cut \$3.25 million from the program. When our exports are at risk; when our other state partners pull out of this project; when the commonwealth pulls out of this project and our exports have gone to the pack, the Rann Labor government will have to have a good look at itself.

Another issue with the budget lines is that Murray Bridge drew the lucky straw: we get two new prisons. It is not all bad: there will be 1 700 construction jobs and probably about 400 jobs once they are up and running, but what was interesting that we learned through estimates was that the \$411 million figure will be for the whole 25-year project time for the prison and will involve management fees. There was a total lack of consultation, yet we come in here and hear people like the minister for Cheltenham talking about his consultation with people and how this is the government for consultation. This just flies in the face of that.

This was announced budget morning in *The Advertiser*. But, now that we have it, the rural city of Murray Bridge Council, other interested parties and I will work with the situation. We need to make sure that the government has enough health services and mental health support in place. This is not just for prisoners and prisoners' families; we will have extra public servants working down there, of course. We need to speed up the process for land release in Murray Bridge for another shopping precinct.

We certainly need to have another upgraded transport system to get people in and out of Murray Bridge quickly. Another issue is country roads. We have about \$7.6 million in extra funding for maintenance. When we look at the budget, there is almost \$1 billion of major capital road works projects in urban areas, and not one of these is in regional South Australia. I was in estimates the other night, and the Attorney-General tried to tell me that the Rann Labor government was the government for regional South Australia. What a joke!

I will take a glance at the river and, obviously, the drought, which are major factors about which I think we all need to have a bipartisan approach, and we must make sure that we handle the resource very carefully. This is a tough time and, as the minister outlined today, we are in uncharted territory. I was impressed with one thing in estimates. I sent some correspondence off to the minister probably six weeks ago, and I asked a question in estimates about the high level of approvals for lake-side water users to get their pumps into the water given the low water pool levels. I had a phone call this morning from one of my constituents in Milang who said that the department has already made contact with irrigators advising that most of the bureaucracy is to be done away with. Instead of needing seven permits, one permit will be all that is required. So, that is progress on that front.

Mr Pisoni: So, are you commending the minister for that?

Mr Pederick: I am commending the minister on that—absolutely. I give credit where it is due. As far as the drought is concerned, yes, it is tough out there. I have plenty of farmers who will reap only 50 per cent of their properties this year, and they are really suffering. We have already lost lads from the area to the mining sector—which is good; at least they have jobs—and there are other farmers going off their farms to get work. Next week, we are hosting a rural business forum in Murray Bridge and we will have not just farmers and irrigators but also bankers and stock agents to help sort out where we are going and whether we will put in an EC application. I have a feeling that we will go down that path. To its credit, PIRSA is coming down to help us work through that process.