

Supply Bill; the Hammond viewpoint – 28 March 07

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I wish to make some remarks regarding supply in relation to my electorate of Hammond. As everyone is aware, we were caught off guard in Hammond when we found that we were to get the new men's and women's prisons, and I wonder what other infrastructure is being planned by the government, because obviously we will need hundreds of homes for the people who work in the prison system. Now that Murray Bridge knows it will get the new prisons, the local council and I are willing to work with the government to get the best outcome for Murray Bridge.

We know that there can be some negatives in having prisons in your community, but we will be working to achieve positive outcomes. Combined with that, I believe that we need to fast-track (and I did mention this in my second reading contribution) the new police station and court complex because, at present, prosecutions have been transferred to Mount Barker. It is not a thing to which we like to lay claim, but Murray Bridge has a higher crime rate than Mount Barker and our prosecution work has had to be transferred because of inadequate courtroom facilities. I believe that it will return to Murray Bridge, but the whole process of upgrading the police station and court complex needs to be fast-tracked to keep up with future demands which will be exacerbated by having the new prison infrastructure in the community.

One thing on which I will commend the government—and I worked with the Minister for Infrastructure—is getting the railway land freed up in Murray Bridge above the river. So long as we have a river, it will be a great thing to see a five-star accommodation development on the cliff. However, what I would like to see is the money put back into Murray Bridge because, with the construction of new prisons and manufacturing development not just in Murray Bridge but at Monarto and to meet the needs of people in the community, more development is needed as far as shopping centres and so on in the town. I go back to the Mallee task force funding. This was something which was addressing the social needs of people in the Mallee. It is a little ironic that the funding was cut not long after the 2006 election campaign when the government ran political offices—the Office of the North, then the Office of the Murray in Murray Bridge. It threw hundreds of thousands, if not millions, around during the election campaign, yet it cannot support social welfare work in the Mallee.

Another matter on which I will commend the government is its work with exceptional circumstances. It had to be dragged in by communities who did all the local work early on, but PIRSA came on board. I congratulate the staff at PIRSA who spent weekends finalising the submissions to get exceptional circumstances reports completed for the community. It was pleasing to see that the Murray-Mallee area and the Upper South-East received exceptional circumstances funding. The River Murray corridor (which is for irrigators from the mouth of the river through to the Riverland and through to the Victorian border) is under review by NRAC and the federal minister, Minister McGauran. They have been given interim funding support. That is a great move for exceptional circumstances, but it will be a while yet, possibly a month or so, before we see whether the irrigators will receive exceptional circumstances funding.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, the member for Bragg said, 'Great work by the local member.' This whole drought situation which caused the area to apply for

exceptional circumstances involved a drought impact reference group of which I was a member. One of the references included the social, environmental and economical effects of the current drought on the area. One thing that could not be included in that reference was the word 'weir', because the government is allergic to it. The point is that it raised this matter in November without consultation and said that it would build a \$20 million weir. If it looked back at the studies, as the engineers did when they undertook the studies for this weir in the 1930s, it would have realised that it was not appropriate to build a weir on a narrow section of the river, so the \$20 million option was never on.

As part of the social reference the consultant, Jonathon Sobels, went out with his brief and was told not to mention the weir, but it was the first thing people mentioned. They said their fear was having their water cut off not only for this year but for next year, the year after and maybe for the next 10 or 12 years. As far as I am concerned, there is nothing temporary about 700 000 to one million tonnes of rock going into that river, the greatest river system in this country. Now it has made the list as one of the most endangered river systems in the whole world, which is just disgraceful, as I mentioned in my previous contribution, due to over allocation and other matters. What would the Rann government be remembered for? This is something with which the press was trying to come to terms. There were not any big answers.

All right, it has created a strategic plan for South Australia—and it is a great thing, we need to plan—but what are the targets? As far as infrastructure, it says, 'We will increase spending.' What does that mean? It will put another white post on the side of a road. It means nothing. The one thing I want to happen under the Rann government is for it to continue its non-spending in regional areas as far as this weir is concerned. I would hold up that as a monument to success in Hammond if this damn weir never goes ahead, because it is not necessary. The pumps at their lower stage will be in water until next March. Under water restrictions, Adelaide will survive for another 12 months. So, Adelaide will have water two years from now. We need other infrastructure planning than using an 18th century so-called solution for fixing a lack of infrastructure planning over the past five years.

We need to look at lowering pumps further, building new pump stations upstream of the locks and running the water into Adelaide and country towns and just getting on with the job. I firmly believe that this weir will destroy the quality of Adelaide's water and then where does the government go from there? It will truly learn the folly of its ways—and that will be the one thing, if nothing else, that will bring this government down.