

**House of Assembly
19 November 2009**

REGIONAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:59): I move:

That this house condemns the state government for its lack of commitment to regional South Australia, especially with regard to water supply, health services, agriculture services and essential infrastructure.

The first item that I will talk about with respect to a lack of investment in this state is regional water infrastructure. We still have communities (and I have spoken of this in the house previously) waiting on potable pipelines to be delivered at Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island. I note that there are still people on Hindmarsh Island concerned about being connected to those pipelines, and I am sure that the member for Finnis and I will work on getting people connected where we can and lobby the government and make sure that people also communicate directly with SA Water.

That is what had to happen on the Narrung Peninsula and in the Meningie area, which were hooked up to potable supplies when Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina became unviable sources for irrigation and potable water supplies because of the drought and the lack of commitment by this government to ensure adequate water for this state. There were certainly people in the communities in those areas who worked hard and who worked with SA Water to make sure that everyone was connected. It was a major piece of work and it took a long time to put in place.

I note that another community that put in a lot of effort was in the creeks pipeline area, Langhorne Creek and Currency Creek, and the company that got together and worked with the government to get an irrigation pipeline there. It took much lobbying and work to install this irrigation pipeline, and if there was fresh water available in the lakes these communities would not have had to go down that path and spend \$10 million of their own money.

I also note the struggle the people have had, especially below Lock 1, in getting action on infrastructure. I note that federal government money for relocating pumps off backwaters still has not flowed through, so there are quite a few irrigators (or people who used to be irrigators) who cannot access water at all. It just stuns me, especially in light of the latest pipelines that are finally being installed after years of lobbying in the Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island areas, that it takes so long. I am sure that if people in Adelaide were denied access to water for only a couple of weeks it would cause quite a furore in the city. It just goes to show that this government does not take the regions seriously.

I also want to speak today about this government's lack of commitment to health in the regions. We saw a lack of consultation with the disastrous Country Health Care Plan that this government rolled out. It just decided it would have three levels of hospitals: a top level, a medium level and a third tier. Our problem on this side of the house was that most, if not all, of the third tier was just going to disappear. I was concerned that the only functioning hospital I would have left in my electorate would be at Murray Bridge and people would have to be transferred either to Mount Barker or Adelaide.

That would be ridiculous, and members of those communities were up in arms, and rightly so. There were meetings attended by 500, 600 and 700 people around the state, ranging from the West Coast through to Yorke Peninsula and down to the South-East. That is the second most important item that people are concerned about in this state after water supply. People are concerned about the availability of health services—and rightly so.

What this government does not realise is that people from the city travel through the country and demand the right to services as well, not only people like me and a lot of members on this side of this place who live in country areas. We on this side of the house firmly believe that we need a health service for country South Australia, and that is why we are putting up a proposal to spend only \$700 million on a complete rebuild of the Royal Adelaide Hospital instead of a \$1.7 billion program at the rail yards site, in addition to what the government needs to do at that site, which is possibly up to \$200 million or more in remediation of contamination. The savings that we will institute when we are elected in March next year can be put into other metropolitan health services and also regional services throughout this state.

Another issue that is dear to my heart is agriculture, and I want to refer to the recent cuts to PIRSA staff. We have seen 90 staff take targeted voluntary separation packages in this government's ongoing roller ball of—

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis: Were you opposed to that?

Mr PEDERICK: —absolutely—looking for cuts to fund its big budget enterprises. We have a government that says, 'We are going to look after agriculture and do the right thing.' In fact, I want to refer to the South Australian Labor Party platform 2009. These are direct statements from the Labor website where the following comments are made:

We will maintain and extend South Australia's competitive advantages in primary production through support for world-class research and development.

We will assist the development of primary industry sector plans with the aim of ensuring that South Australia's key primary industries are the most competitive and productive in Australia.

We will continue to promote the use of sustainable agricultural practices and further develop a range of programs to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation and long-term climate change.

We will work with primary industries and farmers to identify and implement carbon capture and trading opportunities within an evolving national emissions trading scheme.

It goes on and on about how, allegedly, the Labor Party will support rural communities to become more sustainable. For the life of me, I cannot see how, with the massive cuts they are making into research in this state, this will be achieved.

We have seen the Loxton Research Centre reduced to a bare skeleton of its former self. Great work in horticulture in the Riverland is operated out of the Loxton Research Centre. Two laboratories have closed, and it is virtually just a shop door. The Roseworthy Information Centre closed in September. Streaky Bay's Primary Industries office will shut its doors by December.

We are told that well-known South Australian research and development centres, such as Minnipa, Struan and Turretfield are not considered under threat. However, Nuriootpa and Lenswood are considered to be going under the knife, and also offices in Kadina, Jamestown and Keith. The department spokesman said no decisions had been made about any office.

Here we have a government saying in their own forum that they are going to be the champions for regional South Australia and for agriculture in this state, yet they are just cutting a swathe through services, taking massive cuts out of agriculture services in this state, and they have the gall to make out they are committed to rural services.

The University of Adelaide says that it needs to sell its properties in the Mid and Upper North to fund research. I am very disappointed by that move. I am concerned that this will stop philanthropy in this state in terms of people bequeathing land to the university. I just think it is terrible that they are so short of funds that they have to resort to this and there has not been the support to keep these properties, especially in light of some of the work they do there. Antivenom research is conducted at Martindale. I am assured that will go on, but it would have been a far better outcome for South Australia if these properties had been retained by the university.

Regional infrastructure is concerning. Labor's commitments to regional development, in its forum in 2009, include:

Labor will ensure that the provision of new or upgraded infrastructure is responsive to the needs of areas experiencing economic, industrial or population growth.

Under its regional roads and transport plan, it states:

Labor is committed to well planned and well maintained roads in regional South Australia as a prerequisite for building stronger regional development, improving road safety, social inclusion and regional economic growth.

Well, I would invite all the Labor members to come for a ride with me through my electorate to see what some of the roads are like, especially at Pinnaroo, where there are roads that need a total rebuild, out at Wynarka and through other areas of the state.

This is a government that makes out that it is committed to the regions. When they sprang the prison program onto my electorate three years ago the biggest issue was whether we could get appropriate services to Murray Bridge. It seemed a battle to get the government to agree

to appropriate road infrastructure and other upgrades so that it would not become a burden on the community. We were also concerned about the social issues that may have developed with a central prison in a regional town, and also health services associated with that.

There are also other issues in the regions concerning education funding. We have the rollout of the Julia Gillard memorial halls. Schools right across the state have not had the option to upgrade halls to full size. They have been told, 'Well, you can have an \$850,000 gym, but it is only three quarters the size.' Well, I reckon that's a pretty flash gym. I know that schools in my electorate are trying to negotiate their way through so that they can build a better facility and add a bit of community money, but the government is making it extremely difficult.

There are issues in this state with funding that this government pulls from the branched broomrape eradication program. This is a parasite that latches on to legumes, canola plants, horticultural plants, etc., and could destroy the whole horticulture industry in this state. Yet, we see millions of dollars cut from that program over time. So I do not think this government is taking regional South Australia seriously at all.

I need to quickly talk about how this government treats people in the regions in regard to marine parks, with a lack of consultation with the fishing industry, both recreational and commercial, and the anger that people in the fishing sector have in knowing that they have not been listened to and that it is another government program just to bulldoze their program through with lack of consultation. When they have a problem they finally go to the community.