

Speech_Opening of Parliament

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ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:47): First, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on going forward in your new position. I would also like to congratulate the member for Giles on her elevation to the Speaker's role. I also congratulate not only the new members of this house but also returning members from both sides of politics on being re-elected to this parliament.

I welcome to the crossbench the new member for Mount Gambier, Don Pegler. He will bring to this place great knowledge of regional South Australia and, in particular, the issues that affect regional South Australians. These issues can be identified from his close contact with people through local government in his previous role as mayor of the Grant council. The three Independents on the crossbench have been elected to represent our communities of nearly 100,000 people. We are looking forward to being an active part not only of the parliamentary process but also through committee discussions. I also congratulate the Labor Party on its re-election and look forward to working with the government and other members of both houses to ensure that this state moves forward and does not lose the momentum that it has gained so far.

It was only last year that I was elected in the by-election of Frome. I remember very vividly the by-election being declared on Thursday, taking possession of the keys to the Frome electorate office on Friday and, upon opening the door, finding that there were no files on any constituent issues, no stationery, not even a biro. The office walls were bare and everything had been removed—a great welcome to the electorate of Frome!

Mr Pederick: Might need a new office!

Mr BROCK: Might need a new office; you are exactly right. You needed a new office.

An honourable member: That's normal.

Mr BROCK: My partner (Lyn) and I were then given orientation by the parliamentary staff in this house.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr BROCK: Thank you; you can have two. Everything was crammed into one hectic day and the very next day I was sitting here in this house. It was certainly a baptism of fire. However, the new members coming in on the general election should have more time to acclimatise to the locations and procedures within the parliamentary system.

I would also like to sincerely thank the members of my small committee group for the great work they did during the last election campaign, and also express my thanks for the great support I received across the whole electorate of Frome.

At the by-election I was able to have volunteers at only seven of the 25 polling booths. However, at the recent general election, I had the great support of volunteers at all 27 polling booths across the electorate. The number of volunteers who came forward to assist on the day was in excess of 120.

During the last 12 months I have endeavoured to try to represent the constituents of Frome as best I could. I established listening posts in seven different locations outside Port Pirie. I have visited—

Mr Venning interjecting:

Mr BROCK: Member for Schubert, I will take you to my next listening post. I have visited the local governments in my electorate; there are five councils there. I also visited the various community development boards, the progress associations and numerous industries to get a better understanding of their operations and concerns.

I am forever grateful to the people of Frome, having improved my primary vote by nearly 80 per cent and having led the primary vote throughout the whole count. However, as other members in this house have mentioned, no electorate can be taken for granted, and I will not take this win for granted but will continue my efforts to further understand the issues that are confronting Frome and regional South Australia.

I sincerely thank my family for their great support, not only during my journey in state politics but also through my journey and time over 20 years in local government. I would also give special thanks to both of my daughters for their strength. As most members here would realise, one daughter lost her 18 month old son to drowning six months ago, and my other daughter lost her baby at 17 weeks of pregnancy. They are both very strong people, something that I as a father did not see previously. I am very proud of their dedication, commitment and loyalty to me.

I would also like to touch on the Governor's speech at the opening of this parliament concerning the government's plans to introduce additional training places and apprenticeships across the whole industry sector. This is a very important issue if this state is to capitalise on resource industry opportunities. I see that the government has indicated over 100,000 training places over six years. We in this house must ensure that regional locations are included in this move forward.

In Port Pirie we have private industry that is prepared to partner with the government to provide training not only in the wet trades but also in water management and food production. I believe going forward that private industry, if it has the opportunity, should be able to partner with government to be able to provide these opportunities.

With regard to the resources activities that have been mooted for upper north and central South Australia, I would certainly hope that, as the Treasurer commented in the previous sitting of parliament, we endeavour to ensure that this proposed commonwealth resource tax, if implemented, does not impede the growth opportunities in this field.

Just in the electorate of Frome there are some five projects that we are confident will be established within the region. It is estimated they will create some 700 to 1,200 jobs. However, these projects are reliant on BHP Billiton's Roxby Downs expansion going forward, plus the other mines continuing their progress to fruition. Therefore, it is essential that this new proposed tax by the commonwealth government does not impede these projects. This is a tax that is causing grave concern in regional South Australia.

South Australian country health was under some uncertainty some 12 months ago; however, there has been public consultation over the past few months and we are looking at the 10 year plan being completed. I have attended some of those forums, and I will certainly be keeping a close eye on the plan moving forward. Country people need to have not only the services and facilities that are currently there but also access to extra specialised services within their own regions without having to continually go to Adelaide for these services. This is not only expensive but it also creates upheaval and issues within families. At times, this may create other health issues with the extra burden of the financial and emotional stress.

In Port Pirie, we have been fighting for renal dialysis machines in the regional health service for many years—even in my previous role as the Mayor of the Port Pirie Regional Council. However, after many years, and direct consultation with the current Minister for Health, I congratulate the government for establishing the four units in the Port Pirie Regional Health Service. We do need these units in Port Pirie.

This will now enable the current and growing numbers who require this treatment to be able to have the service—and, at times, they require treatment up to three times a week—without having to get up at 5am, travel to Port Augusta or Clare for treatment and then return home. At times, this entails people having to be away from their home for eight to nine hours per day. This creates not only stress on their health but also financial problems. On many occasions, the distance they have to travel in their own vehicle does not qualify for any reimbursement under the PAT Scheme.

To get a better understanding of the issues confronting these people, I accompanied five patients travelling from Port Pirie to Port Augusta. I oversaw their treatment, witnessed what they had to have done during that time and stayed until their discharge. This was over a six hour period, and I was very taken aback by the amount of time it took and inconvenience they had to go through. Hopefully, with the provision of these new machines in the Port Pirie Regional Health Service, this stress may be reduced and make their lives more comfortable and enjoyable.

As mentioned in the Governor's speech, South Australia is leading the nation in renewable energy, and I certainly hope that we continue to establish future projects that will assist with reducing our carbon footprint. The state has great locations for wind turbines, and from discussions that I have had with major companies, this state has some of the best locations for this renewable energy to be established. Whilst we must continue in this direction, we must be very aware that, in some locations, the establishment of wind turbines may be detrimental to the environs. We must ensure that, in creating this renewable energy, we do not jeopardise the current tourism and associated industries that are already established in these locations.

The Social Inclusion Board is paying particular attention to the improved disability services across all eight government agencies. This is an area that is growing and many more of these services and facilities will be required for people with disabilities. As members representing the people of this state, we must ensure that they are not forgotten and that these services are not only maintained but extra services are made available for the people requiring them.

I have a close working relationship with Orana and also Bedford Industries. In fact, I am part of a working committee with other community leaders working with Bedford Industries in Port Pirie to ensure that we are all kept aware of the growing demands within my electorate. Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

[Sitting suspended from 13 : 00 to 14 : 00]

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Mr BROCK (Frome) (15:49): I will continue my remarks. With the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide having been formulated and being reviewed, this parliament must not forget the other parts of the states that are not closely connected to the Greater Adelaide area. The state's population is projected to reach 1.64 million by 2014 and 2 million by 2029. This growth cannot be sustained within the Greater Adelaide region. As a state, we must ensure that the outer regional areas are encouraged to grow, for these are the areas that will produce the requirement for this growth in our state's population. These are the areas from where the resource industry will sustain its viability, agriculture and also our food production.

Adelaide's water requirements are being accommodated by the provision of the new desalination plant at Port Stanvac, as well as from the city's nearby water catchments. However, the rest of the state is reliant upon the River Murray, and we even have areas of the state that have no access to the River Murray. As a state, we must look at alternative avenues of supply to assure not only human reliance upon this but also assure the requirements of growing industries, the resource sector in particular. The health of the River Murray is deteriorating. We can continue to reduce offtake from the River Murray to maintain its health as best we can, but we must remember that we are at the tail end of the Murray Darling Basin.

While we may reduce the offtake and usage of water from the River Murray, we are also decimating the food bowl, a very proud food bowl in years gone by. Members down that way will have seen it; it is deteriorating very quickly, and we are now importing most of our food products from overseas. In that regard, I have recently had conversations with a firm called Windesal in relation to the opportunity of building a wind turbine desalination plant for Port Pirie. This project will not damage the environment of the gulf because all the brine and waste will be contained on the ground and processed into soda ash, as well as biofuels. It will be operated by two or three turbines, and is different to the project proposed for Whyalla with no brine or any other impurities going back into the Gulf. I have spoken to the Minister for Water Security as well as the Premier regarding this opportunity.

In his speech to parliament the Governor also mentioned the issue of the continuing and growing number of road fatalities and long-term injuries. We must continue to promote road safety, and look at issues with regard to alcohol interlock systems fitted to vehicles. Whilst we may implement these measures, we must also ensure that our road systems, particularly those in regional South Australia, are maintained and improved. Some of those roads have been there for many years and are in very bad condition; in most cases not a lot of maintenance has been carried out. I have to say that this is not a recent occurrence; it has been the case over many years, and both sides of politics need to share the blame.

I believe that we should establish school training for driver education not only for our secondary schools but also in the latter part of the primary system. I can speak from experience: if you lose someone in a road accident it has long-term effects not only on yourself but also on your family and your friends. It is in this area that I notice the government will recruit an extra 300 police officers for South Australia, and I certainly hope that this number increases the net number of officers serving our communities. It is okay to say that we are recruiting an extra number of police officers, but we must also understand the number of resignations and retirements. In addition, we must ensure that we are aware of where these extra police officers are to be stationed: will it be operational duties, administrative duties, or as traffic escorts for the growing number of large items of mining equipment and houses that are being transported through Adelaide to regional areas of South Australia?

This state has the greatest opportunity for growth in its history. It is a window of opportunity, and we must not let it slip.

Motion carried.