

Speech_Opening of Parliament

House of Assembly - Thursday, 16 February 2012, Page 258

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr BROCK (Frome) (16:12): I would like to contribute and respond to the speech by His Excellency the Governor of South Australia on the opening of the Second Session of the Fifty-Second Parliament of South Australia. As the member for Fisher indicated yesterday, I also would like to congratulate the Governor Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce and his wife, Liz, on their reappointment and thank them very sincerely for their dedicated service to all of our state over the last few years and wish them well in the next couple of years.

I would also like to comment on some of the seven primary areas of focus for action by the government which were mentioned in that speech. I will start with the clean green food industry. Our state is already a leader in sustainability in many areas. I will mention one of those, and that is South Australia's own Spencer Gulf King Prawn Fishery, which has become the world's first king prawn fishery to receive the prestigious Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for sustainability. That has been a great achievement and I congratulate everybody involved with that award. This is only one example of South Australia striving for excellence in terms of food sustainability and security.

Talking about food sustainability and security, the next issue is water. Not only is food security a challenge, but also our water security. I will continue to lobby for what I consider is best for our state and work with members of this house and the other place and also with regional South Australia. We must act as Australians, not as individual states, to ensure that we all survive. We should look at ideas that may not be conventional and to some may be controversial. We need to be innovative and look at increasing the amount of water that is in the system, not continually reduce what we use for food production and human needs.

We must have a vital and healthy River Murray system and Murray-Darling Basin. We must also ensure that the livelihoods of those people on the River Murray and the Murray-Darling Basin are not decimated, and that the food production future of our state and nation and also opportunities for exporting overseas are secure.

Regarding the resources, this state is on the cusp of a new beginning with regard to our resource opportunities, with many projects in varying stages of development, not only in the northern part of the state but in the different peninsulas. The world is demanding our resources for their own growth and existence. We, as a state, should not lose sight of the fact that we are in the box seat. However, to be able to achieve this great opportunity we need power and water. It is very easy to say that we need these resources but we cannot continue to take from the existing resource—in particular, from the Great Artesian Basin. These basins have taken millions of years to fill and if we keep extracting greater than the infill, then we will have a great environmental disaster.

Again, this is in line with my previous statement. We need to look at innovative ideas to be able to bring more water which will allow these activities to be able to be achieved. The top end of South Australia in particular is a gold mine. It is going to be a great opportunity for whoever is in government and for all of our state and our families. To ensure that we have those opportunities, we need to look at how we get extra water and not take it out of the basin.

With regard to manufacturing, along with other parts of Australia, this sector is competing with other regions, in particular China and Asia. We are competing to be able to produce consumables at a very realistic price. As a nation we have lost numerous manufacturing sectors—the whitegoods and textile industries to name two—and now our car manufacturing is under threat. Until recently this state was a proud supplier and builder of various marine projects. I mention the Whyalla shipyards. These closed many years ago and thousands of jobs were lost at the time. Whyalla is only now starting to recover. The resource opportunity may overcome that, but we lost that proud industry in Whyalla, and it is something we really do not want to lose again.

Our defence industry has now started to get back on track with the activities in Adelaide. However, we need to work to ensure our jobs are protected, not only for ourselves but our future generations.

Regarding education, I am very passionate about young people and how we steer them through the formative years. Being a parent and a grandparent of 13 from my now extended and blended family, I have been blessed with a happy and healthy family. My family has not had to engage with specialist services such as speech pathology for our children but I have been lobbied by those directly affected by conditions such as autism and Down syndrome.

I mention these two issues as I have been meeting with the relevant ministers and although the government has allocated funds to allow these people to access services, there is in fact a shortage of allied health professionals to deliver the actual services. However, to the credit of both the ministers that I have spoken to, they are investigating this issue and looking at solutions. Every child deserves to have the best opportunity for their future and each child will achieve the best that they are able to achieve in their life. However, as legislators, we must ensure that there are adequate resources and funds.

Another area of concern is in regard to ever increasing pressures being placed on families, pensioners and the unemployed. Other people in this house have mentioned the ever increasing costs on utilities. These people are struggling to be able to pay for their increasing utilities costs. There are also issues associated with accessing medical specialists in terms of the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS). The rate of reimbursement of this scheme has not changed for many years despite the significant increase in fuel and accommodation costs. I will continue to lobby the minister and my fellow colleagues for a change and an increase to the PATS.

Regarding land tax: whilst it may not have been on the list the other day, this is an area of concern, especially in regional South Australia, particularly for developers. Land was selling fast, then the global financial crisis hit and confidence started to wane in regional areas. I speak not only for my electorate but I know that other country members here also have the same concerns. Developers were left with many unsold blocks. Under the current system they are not only paying council rates but also have to pay land tax on each individual block, eventually eroding the profit.

I refer now to country roads, and, again, this has been brought up by other members. Regrettably, there are still too many accidents on regional and rural roads. Fatalities and serious injuries happen all too often. Some of the roads in regional South Australia are in a very bad condition. Whilst lack of maintenance continues to be cited as a reason for some accidents, consecutive governments have neglected our regional road infrastructure.

It is my belief that we should also be reinforcing school-based education programs aimed at road safety across primary and secondary schools. I can certainly speak from experience: if you lose somebody in a road accident it has long-term effects for many years, not only on yourself but also your family and your friends.

However, I would like to congratulate the government for the reconstruction of the main street of Bute. After negotiations with the minister and the department, the main street was not patched but reconstructed. I congratulate them for looking at the longer term and the best way of doing that which was not to patch up but to reconstruct, and also for the funds that will allow for the redesign and reconstruction of Anama Lane and the Spalding intersection just north of Clare over the next couple of years. I also congratulate the government on the major works that have happened on the Tarlee to Kapunda road. This state has the greatest opportunities for growth. It is our window of opportunity and we must not let it slip.