

Speech_Natural Resource Committee – 06.02.13

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NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

Mr BROCK (Frome) (11:54): Mr Speaker, I also congratulate you on your new position, and I know you will do an excellent job up there. At the same time I would also like to thank and pay tribute to the previous speaker the Hon. Lyn Breuer, the member for Giles. I thought the member for Giles did an excellent job, but certainly we are looking for guidance from the Speaker and some improved protocols in this chamber.

Along with the previous speakers, I also compliment all the members of this committee. This is a very hard-working committee and its members cover a wide range of political parties, as well as Independents. This committee would be one of the hardest-working committees in the parliament. We have many visits to regional areas. We have dedicated ourselves to dealing with issues affecting the natural resources and environment across the whole of the state, under the leadership of the Hon. Steph Key. As the member for Stuart indicated, she has been a great Presiding Member for this committee. Not only does she make everybody feel relaxed but she also encourages everybody to have their say, and that is what happens on this committee.

The member for Stuart and other members may have mentioned that one of our big inquiries was the review of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, which the previous minister for water asked us to do. It was a very worthwhile, encouraging and informative inquiry. We visited the Riverland and other areas in the Murray-Darling Basin. Those people were very appreciative that a committee came down and took their views. Too often, the community, the parliament and associations forget about the regions and the locals. If you can go out there and show that you believe in them and feel for them, then they feel a bit more relaxed and more confident in giving full information. The result of our inquiry was that our submission to the parliament was then taken up by the government of the day, and I am sure that the response and the outcome is better for both the whole region and South Australia.

In regard to the NRM levies, one thing I find, when they send their plans in to our committee for us to have a look at and endorse, is that the time frame we have to digest and examine what they are going to do for the forthcoming year and get it through the system needs to be look at very

seriously. We need to look at the time frames on that so as to give the NRM boards and the councils an opportunity to communicate with their communities, to get their plans through to the Natural Resources Committee for its views and comments, for us to get back to those boards if we have any concerns, and then get it through to the minister.

There was also the bushfire inquiry. The Hon. Iain Evans asked us to do this inquiry and when we went up to his electorate I saw a video of the Canberra bushfires. Even though we were in a CFS shed and were only watching a video, I felt the ferocity of that fire. Too often, I do not think people understand the dangers and the devastating effect that bushfires can have. The Hon. Iain Evans was very forceful and we did do that inquiry, and I certainly learned a lot about the issue.

Another inquiry was initiated by the member for Flinders, Peter Treloar. He asked if we could do an inquiry into water on the Eyre Peninsula, to look at the opportunities over there and see firsthand the issues confronting that region. It was an eye opener and, again, we certainly learned a lot, and I think the member for Stuart already indicated that that inquiry is still ongoing.

The member for Fisher raised the issue of the funding of committees. I know that everything is tight, but if we have an issue that we need to deal with or investigate, I think the parliament needs to be very serious about allocating adequate funds. Nobody wants to waste resources—and certainly not this committee—but if we are going to do our job correctly then we need to be able to get out there and talk to the people, feel the issues and conduct site visits. I do not think every committee should have the same allocation, but certain committees need to go out further into the whole state and I think we need to look at the budgets around that in the coming years.

The other one is our visits to the region. Again, I reinforce this from a region's point of view: at times, people in the regions at times feel as if they are neglected and unloved. But, by going out there and talking to these people face-to-face, and visiting the locations, farms, etc., it certainly gives them a far better idea and appreciation that the parliament is there to serve all South Australians, and I think that is what is happening with the Natural Resources Committee of this parliament.

In closing, I would also like to thank the parliament for the opportunity to be able to serve on this committee. This is my first full term, and I have certainly learned a tremendous amount about the issues confronting regional South

Australia, including the Adelaide Hills, through the Natural Resources Committee. We need to ensure that we do everything to protect that but, at the same time, we need to make certain that we are very resilient and aware that we need to also back industries and continuation for that. I again thank the Hon. Steph Key for her leadership as the presiding member, and I also thank all the members of this committee. I commend the report to parliament.

Motion carried.