

# SPEECH

**House of Assembly\_ Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013\_ Page 6460**

Debate on second reading.

## **PORT PIRIE SMELTING FACILITY (LEAD-IN-AIR CONCENTRATIONS) BILL\_23.7.13**

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:23): I also rise to support this bill. Let me make it quite clear at the start that I am very appreciative of the government's bringing the bill forward. The bill gives certainty not only to Nyrstar's in-principle support for a new plant at Port Pirie but also for potential developers coming in and also for potential partners for funding the shortfall.

The member for Waite has indicated that he has had discussions with me, and I certainly have had meetings with the member for Waite regarding this, and I thank him for that. More importantly, I thank all of the key players in the lead-up to this program (the in-principle agreement between the federal government and Nyrstar), including the state government and also the federal government. It was a very long, very tedious and nervous wait for the people of Port Pirie, in particular, to understand where we would be going with the transformation of a new plant in Port Pirie.

I must also make it public here that I did spend 30 years of my working life at Nyrstar down there, and I have seen from when I first started in 1978 up until my retirement in 2008 the transformation of the technology and the reduction in the lead emissions coming from that plant. That has been a great transformation. The blood lead levels of our children in Port Pirie have been over-exaggerated, in my opinion, over-publicised and unwarranted. The people of Port Pirie have done everything they can, and there have been massive improvements there. I think that the media have not portrayed us fairly and given the people of Port Pirie a fair go.

Also, I publicly acknowledge that two of my stepsons are currently working at Nyrstar and that many of my friends still work at Nyrstar. Many of my friends and associates in Port Pirie and the region are dependent on the success of Nyrstar and its continuation in some form. I am very supportive of its continuation in a new format.

Leading up to the in-principle support, I have to say that I was an annoying factor to the Premier, in particular, to Minister Koutsantonis in his role leading up to this, and also to any federal member I came in contact with. Whether it was a member of the federal government or somebody in opposition, every time I had the opportunity I would talk about Nyrstar and the importance of these issues. Sometimes people on the federal side were not aware of the importance Nyrstar has to the community of Port Pirie.

I know that on both sides of the house here everybody understands the importance of this industry, not only to Port Pirie and the region but also to the South Australian economy. I continue to lobby the ministers, the Premier and the

senators from both sides of federal politics to ensure that when this is being discussed it is at the forefront of everything, and that is what has happened now. It has gone forward. The in-principle support has been agreed to. I hope that this bill goes through with no objection because integration is very important to the Nyrstar board, Port Pirie and Hobart and, if one goes down, the other goes down. People do not understand that. Both sites need to be vibrant, healthy and profitable, otherwise Hobart will also be a catalyst for Port Pirie to go down.

I want to see this bill go through with tripartisan support, not only bipartisan. We must remember that here we have crossbenches. We are not members of the Liberal Party, we are not members of the government. We are here to represent our communities, so I want to see tripartisan support and for it to be very public from this house here. When it goes to the Legislative Council, I want to be able to see people think seriously about the future direction.

Consider that the current plant is over 130 years old; it is old technology. The centre plant there was a pilot plant. It is still going. What can we expect? Everything changes on a regular basis. I implore the members of the opposition to liaise with their colleagues in the upper house and the government side to ensure that when it gets up there it is debated professionally, honestly, seriously and sensibly. I want to be able to see a positive response go to the Nyrstar board to say that the South Australian government, the South Australian parliament, are all supporting this legislation going through. The last thing we want to see is some member on either side or from whichever party to start to put the negative in there and the uncertainty to the Nyrstar board.

This is very important not only to Port Pirie for economic growth but also for certainty. The people of Port Pirie have been promised many things over many years from both sides of politics, and we have got nothing. We have had promise after promise. The people of Port Pirie are sick and tired of having promises and nothing happening. This is something that even the people of Port Pirie now are saying. I have had to do a lot of convincing and say that I am very positive of this going through.

When it started there was uncertainty to the degree that Nyrstar lost many very valuable and highly qualified tradespeople who moved on. They have gone to the mines, they have gone to the resources sector, they have come to Adelaide. The people who are suffering from this are our community. Nyrstar have many long-term employees who have been very loyal over many years, some people having been there for over 50 years—families, generation after generation. We want to have this new transformation plant to be able to have security in Port Pirie in my community, for my friends and my family, and to say that we are going to be there for another 30 years and having that security.

Also, the lead in the blood of our children is an issue we are all very passionate about. I am sure that whichever side we are on, we consider it important. The lead in the blood of our children is a very big issue, and has been over many years with the smelter. Pasminco was the first one; it went into receivership, and then it started to acknowledge it. Then Zinifex came in, and the general manager said, 'We have an issue with the lead in blood; we have a responsibility.'

Everyone else was saying that it was not their responsibility, but Zinifex took ownership of that and started to deal with it. Then Zinifex itself was sold to Nyrstar. To Nyrstar's credit, it has continued to take ownership of reducing emissions. It has a very strict EPA licence and has regulatory 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year monitoring. Nyrstar has its own monitoring facilities there in conjunction with and additional to the EPA's.

I think that for far too long the way Port Pirie has been portrayed in the media is something that is not justified and not warranted. I cannot wait until such time as this new plant gets into Port Pirie and it is announced, because I will lead the charge there with the mayor and the CEO to make certain that this is the new Port Pirie. I do not care what they have been doing before; I want to see a positive attitude and security not only for my family but for the generations to come and for the community and the region of Port Pirie as well.

Whilst at the start there was a fair bit of jostling around with this bill, a bit of uncertainty about it and a bit of political stuff, I must honestly say that there was a bit of confusion about whether the minister should have the final say if the EPA had to change the licence after the settling in period of the new plant. The member for Waite has indicated that he is not playing politics on this side, and I agree. I do not want to play politics with this bill. I want to see this bill in here; it is a very good bill.

In my discussions with Minister Kenyon we talked about this; I said that I wanted to have a public forum in Port Pirie, and we had a public forum in Port Pirie. As most of our country members will understand, if you call a public forum in the community sometimes you get only a small number, but we had about 80 people there. We had a very good meeting. The minister came, and we had the professional people and the scientists come up, and they answered questions and explained it very clearly to my community. If my community is okay with this bill, then I am okay with this bill. I do not care what people in Adelaide think about the bill; this bill relates to my community, my people, and if my people in Pirie say, 'Go for it, member for Frome,' I will do that. I have had unwavering support to pass this bill, to make sure it gets through the parliament.

The member for Waite has made a couple of comments. If this bill does not go through, or if the plant transformation does not take place, what is the damage to Port Pirie? First up is if the transformation does not happen. We understand about the economic collapse and so forth; we have so much uncertainty in this country and the world at the moment that the last thing we want to have is some industry go down. The people of Port Pirie have lost confidence, businesses have lost confidence, because of the uncertainty politically and the negativity from the media.

We have people who are looking at coming into Port Pirie to live, and then they see the media stuff about the lead in the blood of children, etc., and they say, 'We're not coming to Port Pirie.' They do not give us a chance. There is just as much pollution in other areas of our state and in Australia, but we seem to be getting the worst scenario. We have people who want to develop in Port Pirie, but as soon as they hear about this lead issue they walk away.

I cannot tolerate this anymore. I want to be able to see this new plant go forward. It will reduce the emissions coming out, but at the same time we all have to take ownership of our own health; no matter who it is they need to take ownership of their own health and do all the precautionary stuff. If we continue the way we are the moment, with the same plant and no change, then I believe that the security of the smelters will not be guaranteed. It will not give any confidence to our community, it will not have the economic growth factor, and it will affect lots of issues, including for the Port Pirie Regional Council, because house prices will go down, capital value will down, there will be less in rates and so fewer services.

If we close the site, as the member for Waite has indicated—it is an old site; it is a massive site, and I do not think people understand the enormity of the site until such time as they see it—there would be an enormous clean-up. There would be hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of clean-up. The other thing and the best idea is transformation for a new plant. That is the only way to go; it is the answer to all our questions.

I have liaised with the member for Waite, and I appreciate that the member for Waite has come in and we have had some discussions regarding this. I have had the opportunity to put my point of view across to the member, and also to Minister Koutsantonis, Minister Kenyon and the Premier. I have also done a lot of lobbying in Port Pirie. We have had regular meetings with the general manager of Nyrstar, and I have had meetings with the board.

I have had meetings with the entire Port Pirie Regional Council, the CEO, the mayor and the councillors. I have had meetings with the chamber of commerce—I will make this public: I am on the executive of the Port Pirie Chamber of Commerce. The chamber of commerce has had meetings with all the key stakeholders, including Nyrstar. One of the things we have not mentioned here is Regional Development Australia. We have had meetings with them, because again they are part of the team that needs to push this going forward.

Hopefully, this bill would have gone through this house at the end of this week, or by the end of next month at the very latest; I acknowledge that if there is no objection from the House of Assembly, I would be very grateful for that. I cannot wait until it goes through the Legislative Council, and I cannot wait until the bill comes back here for ratification and is passed, and then we put that to the Nyrstar board and say that this parliament is all for the transformation for the new plant. I am looking forward to that very good day. I commend the bill to the parliament.