

SPEECH

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PORT PIRIE SMELTING FACILITY (LEAD-IN-AIR CONCENTRATIONS) BILL

The Hon. T.R. KENYON

(Newland—Minister for Manufacturing, Innovation and Trade, Minister for Small Business) (16:16):

There are just a few points I want to raise. I agree with just about everybody's point that Nyrstar is an incredibly important company for Port Pirie. It is quite clear with employing such a large percentage of the town at any one point that were this smelter to close there would be catastrophic consequences for the local community. While we are still waiting on the final investment decision from Nyrstar, it is fair to say the government is doing everything it can to make sure that this investment decision is a positive one, that they decide to reinvest in their plant, in fact build a completely new plant, and to continue processing lead, silver and other minerals at that location. It is certainly something I am very keen to see.

The member for Waite talked about the indemnity that would accrue to the government as a result of this bill and the agreements made with Nyrstar. I just want to make sure the house is clear that the indemnity is not a general indemnity; it is in fact an indemnity that relates only to certain decisions, environmental decisions, made by the government that would affect the continued operations of Nyrstar as result of decisions made around environmental conditions and regulations. That is what the indemnity will be based around and it declines over time. For every year our silver is delivered from the new plant, that indemnity declines over time.

The member for Frome spoke quite eloquently about the effect on his community and the importance to his community of the Nyrstar thing. I should point out that the member for Frome has been an absolute champion for this project. He has never missed an opportunity to talk to the government, to talk to investors, to talk to the company, to talk to anybody who will listen about the importance of this project and what they can do to help it get along. I would just like to acknowledge that, that the member for Frome has done everything he possibly could to get this deal and this rejuvenation happening.

He talked about being annoying, and just for the record I want to confirm to him and to the parliament that he did get to the point of being annoying with his vociferous campaigning on behalf of this. Just so that no-one is in any doubt, the member for Frome is right, he almost annoyed people because he was so keen to talk to people. He did not, of course, and everybody understands that he was advocating passionately and in a dedicated fashion on behalf of his community, as he always does.

I would suggest to Nyrstar, should they make the investment decision and build the plant, that they might want to call it the Geoff Brock plant, the Geoff Brock refinery. That might be an appropriate recognition of his contribution to this project. I do not know that he will be campaigning for that—I do not think he will, but it would be worth considering and I might put it to them when they come over next.

The member for Waite has raised some questions about the select committee. My inclination is to agree that it is, in fact, a hybrid bill and therefore needs a select committee to go through it. However, even if you accept the arguments put forward by the member for Waite, and he went through them in some detail, it has been the practice of this house to do this for a long time. It is a practice that I am not necessarily disagreeing with, to be honest, because, if we are going to confer a benefit on an individual company, it is important that the parliament has the opportunity to give it an extra degree of scrutiny.

In general, we need to be very cautious about bills that give a benefit to a particular company. We should not go around doing this at a moment's notice, which we do not, of course. However, when one does come up, it has been the practice in the past. I was a member of the committee that looked into the indenture bill around the Penola pulp mill. The member for MacKillop, I think, was on that committee as well, and the member for Ashford, if I remember rightly, was also on that committee. That was an important piece of legislation and, because it was conferring a benefit on an individual company, it was important to give it that scrutiny, which we did. That is why I think that it is important that the house has the opportunity to give this bill an extra degree of scrutiny, and we will do that in good time.

I thank the opposition for allowing the bill to pass speedily through the house. Hopefully, it will; I do not want to anticipate how things may go, but certainly the opposition has been very cooperative in dealing with this bill. I think that I will do the thanks in the third reading, assuming that we get to that point. There are a lot of people who have got us to this point. I will name them at a later point, but I would like to thank them for their contribution.

It has been a long and arduous process, in many ways, getting to this point. It has been complicated, and there has been a great deal of dedication shown by a great number of people, ranging from those who are working on getting the investment decision and getting the government support package created and then in place, right through to the parliamentary counsel, of course, and those involved in the drafting and the negotiation of the bill. I will name them at a later point, but I would like to put on the record now the fact that a large number of people have been involved in getting the bill to this point. With those few words, I commend the bill to the house.