



House of Assembly

Extract from Hansard

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Supply Bill 2016

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)
(16:53):**

I would like to add a few comments to this debate and perhaps highlight some priorities that I believe are important in my electorate, and I would also like to provide some commentary on a couple of the issues discussed in this chamber over the last few months before we went on our Easter break.

A lot has been said today about Transforming Health. From my point of view, I certainly support what is being done. It certainly will assist people in my electorate and deliver more improved services. This is not just for people in the metropolitan area but also for people in the country area.

One of the benefits of Transforming Health is that by

having specialist elective surgery centres people have greater guarantee of having it when it is scheduled.

I understand that about 20 per cent of elective surgery is for country people. Often, that elective surgery is put off when more urgent matters come up in an existing hospital. By having a dedicated centre for elective surgery, it ensures that those sorts of disruptions do not occur as much, which provides a greater service to country people.

I think one of the spin-off benefits of Transforming Health is that people in regional and rural South Australia will have a much more accessible service, in the sense that it will be reliable and it will be there when they require it.

A person who lives just outside my electorate sought my assistance recently. Not only did he need some elective surgery but also he suffered immensely as a result of the fires, and his elective surgery was about to be put off once again. Not only did he have the trauma of a physical condition to be dealt with but he obviously had the emotional trauma of the fire. He lost his house, his property and he was literally five seconds away from being killed himself.

This man's elective surgery was about to be put off so, like all MPs do, you lobby for your people. We lobbied and we were able to keep his elective surgery

on schedule. That is the sort of thing that country people put up with. By having specialised elective surgery centres, which is proposed under Transforming Health, people in country areas will have a much more reliable service.

One thing I touched on earlier this week, which I would like to finish on, is that, with ANZAC Day approaching, we have an opportunity as a community to acknowledge the contribution made by our service personnel, not only people here or overseas—people who were involved in some conflict over the century—but also people who are behind and made a contribution to the war effort, as well as partners and family members who had a partner overseas fighting, etc. They are a part of that war effort as well.

ANZAC Day is really a day where we reflect upon those conflicts and what they mean to not only our nation as a whole but also our communities, so the services in our communities are very important. For the centenary event of ANZAC Day last year, in my community we had about 10,000 people participate in the dawn service, which is a huge crowd for a community of our size. One of the things that the Gawler RSL is involved in is doing a march. They do an annual march, usually the Sunday before ANZAC Day, but this year it was actually going to be the Sunday prior to that because they are getting a bit older and they did

not want two events within 24 hours.

They are required to close off streets, get the police involved and local government involved, like a lot of community organisations.

These days, community organisations have to really jump through hoops to actually do some events, and I touched upon this issue a bit earlier this week. I understand the issue of risk and a whole range of occupational health and safety things, but at some point we are going to make things so difficult as a society, where people are trying to protect their patch—it is probably not appropriate to say today—that it is the case where the operation was a success but the patient died, where we are risk free but we actually do nothing in our communities.

We will live in a community lacking culture, lacking community, lacking events, etc. That is the sort of imposition we place on community organisations.

The march was planned for this Sunday. Subsequently, the local RSL decided to pull the pin and cancel the march. There has been an uproar in the community, and understandably.

I got more hits on my Facebook on this issue than any other issue for many months, and the community were quite rightly angered. What disappointed me

the most about that was not so much that the event was cancelled as a result of miscommunication, and perhaps some people in authority could have done a bit more than they are doing to support our returned services people, but that as soon as the event was cancelled out went the media statements, and everybody protected their patch and started blaming others for it. It was not a reflection as to why the event was actually cancelled or a reflection of, 'What can we do better to make sure the event goes ahead?'

Sitting extended beyond 17:00 on motion of Hon. S.E. Close .

The Hon. A. PICCOLO: As I said, my disappointment was that all of the parties went to the trenches and decided to protect their patch rather than ask, 'What has gone wrong here? What can we learn, and what can we do to ensure it does not happen again?' Fortunately, people have seen the community anger, and the event is back on, but it should not have come to this point.

We should be supporting our community organisations because, without them, our communities would be very sparse—culturally sparse and sparse in a sporting context.

There are not many walks of life in our communities which are not touched upon by a volunteer in some way. Certainly, volunteers require

support, etc., but they do important work.

I am glad the ANZAC Day march is back on in Gawler this Sunday. I will be there supporting our Gawler RSL and our returned service personnel, but I am hoping that, from this experience, those people involved in government in some way, whether it is local, state or federal, reflect upon what they can do differently. It is easy to give a community organisation a whole book of things to do and say, 'This is what you need to do to meet the requirements today,' but we actually need to help these community organisations through that process. We need to make sure we do not lose what is really important about local communities.

With the few moments I have left, I would like to talk about some of the important things I hope to see included in this year's budget. One of the things I would clearly like to see is some money to deal with blackspots in terms of telecommunications. I realise that was a responsibility of the commonwealth and they have not done as much but, putting that aside for a moment, particularly in my area, I have Wasleys and a couple of other communities which would benefit immensely from improved communications.

I understand the sort of investment required is not a huge amount, so I have been talking to some ministers

behind the scenes to ensure that they are aware of my desire to have some moneys put aside for that—not because it is my electorate but because the Pinery fires identified a problem there not only from a community safety point of view but just purely in terms of running businesses in rural towns.

People trying to run online businesses find it very difficult. There is the issue of economic activity in those towns, there are issues of safety in those towns, but there are also issues of making sure those people do not miss out on engaging with community as well. I know a lot of people in the community find accessing the internet quite difficult or quite expensive, so I am hoping that the government will look at that.

The other issue I would like to see addressed is maintaining our air coverage in the emergency services area. I think it is very important. While I accept that fires are fought on the ground, and won and lost on the ground by our volunteers and other people working in that area—all the people in the emergency services area—the air coverage provides a level of comfort and confidence, and actually helps our people on the ground.

I am hoping we will be able to reach some sort of agreement with Victoria, Tasmania and the other states who I understand are having discussions with the state government and the

commonwealth to make sure we maintain that coverage.

With only 15 seconds left, I would like to say that the opposition has, on a number of occasions today, reflected on the government. It is interesting to note they do not actually reflect on the fact they have been in opposition for 14 years. Perhaps there should be some reflection about their own performance.