



## **REGIONAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (12:14): I speak against this motion, because I can tell the house that the government does support our region, and I will outline how. However, one thing I would like to mention relates to the member for Hammond's comment about his commitment to agriculture. I do not doubt his commitment, but the commitment of some of his colleagues to agriculture would have to be under some doubt, given their recent opportunity to support an inquiry into an area that is important to farmers. To the embarrassment of the member for Hammond, all three of those members voted against it. We were told it is a trivial inquiry, but it is interesting to note how many submissions were received, and how many were actually received from the electorates of members opposite. We were also told that it was not an issue, that they were not aware of any. Clearly, that indicates just how out of touch the opposition is.

Talking to the opposition these days is like going to a restaurant; it is a question of whether it is the soup of the day or the fish of the day. It is the opposition of the day; you are not actually sure who is the opposition on the day, because the views of its members vary so much. So, to say that the opposition actually supports something is a bit far-fetched, because it depends on what day and who you talk to.

Putting that aside, the Rann government recognises that regional South Australia makes a significant contribution to the state's export performance—I have said that publicly on a number of occasions; parts of my electorate, in particular, make a contribution to that—and to gross state product through agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, wine production, food processing, tourism, manufacturing, and mining and minerals production and processing. The minister in this house is a strong advocate for those industries, promotes them and goes into bat for them, in contrast to the opposition, which continually talks down regional South Australia and what is being done in those areas. Rural areas of the state also provide South Australians with fresh, healthy, clean and green food products, great places to stay and visit, and are increasingly becoming the source of green energy, positioning the state for a much more prosperous and sustainable future.

When Labor came to government in 2002 confidence in the state was at an all time low. Under the leadership of the Rann Labor government since 2002, rural and regional South Australia has been steered from a trajectory of decline to one of prosperity and growth. South Australia's strong performance in the wake of the global financial crisis has highlighted the strength and importance of a diverse economy as well as the resilience of regional South Australia, which this government supports.

The Rann government's steadfast commitment to developing the defence, mining, wine, food and tourism industries has assisted the economy to outperform the nation in terms of growth, state final demand, and employment. These achievements are all the more remarkable given that this has happened when much of regional South Australia has been in the grip of a prolonged drought.

This has not happened by chance; rather, it has been the result of the Rann government's strong economic leadership and the implementation of targeted actions aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth and diversification, addressing workforce issues, and assisting economic and social infrastructure development. At the same time Labor has continued to support primary producers and communities that have been faced with the worst drought on record and record low inflows into the River Murray.

Meanwhile, as I have mentioned, the Liberals have consistently talked down our regions. As we have heard today, not only have they talked down our regions, they have also consistently talked down our farmers, and that is evidenced by their behaviour on some of the committees, such as the Economic and Finance Committee.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Not all.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: They certainly did. Their view on the committee was that the farming issue was a trivial matter for us to get involved in, not worthy of being looked into by our committee. So, by extension, the farming issue must be a trivial matter as well. That is how the Liberals—

Mr Williams interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: By all means, correct the record. Then they went on with something about taxation reform. The opposition was going to reform the taxation system in a matter of two weeks! That is how the opposition in this place behaves; it says one thing in the media and in its communities and then acts to the contrary in this place. Its record is clear for all to see.

Mr Williams: I put my vote on the record.

Mr PICCOLO: By all means put your vote on the record; I am quite happy for you to do that. Meanwhile, as I said, the Liberals have consistently talked down our regions. Their only vision for our regions is one of battling local industry, struggling and falling populations, high unemployment, and generally being in a mood of despair. By contrast, this government recognises how important they are.

We can rightly ask ourselves: how has this picture painted by the Liberals helped regional South Australia? How does it sell the regions to Australia and the world? The Liberal opposition does not; it talks it down to achieve its own petty political aims.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Is that the best you can do? The people of Finniss deserve better than that.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: That's right.

Mr Venning: The people of Freeling will hear about this.

Mr PICCOLO: I am sure they will. The people of Freeling are much more comfortable with me than you, Ivan; don't worry about that.

Mr Venning: I am going there.

Mr PICCOLO: By all means go there; it will be the first time you have been. The reality is that the people—

Mr Pederick: You had better apologise for misleading the house.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I rise on a point of order. The member for Hammond has repeatedly accused the member for Light of misleading the house. It is completely unparliamentary and I ask that he withdraw and apologise.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was distracted and did not hear. If the member for Hammond has done that he should be aware that such a motion can be moved only by substance. If he made comments that were unparliamentary I invite him to withdraw and apologise. Member for Hammond? There is no response. The member for Light will continue.

Mr PICCOLO: It is fine, Madam Deputy Speaker. The reality is that the people in our regions are tough and resilient, determined to overcome their challenges, and Labor will continue to work with them and be

there to provide support. Our regions do face major challenges, there is no denying that, from things such as climate change, record low inflows.

In terms of climate change, let us not even go there with the Liberals. It does not happen. They are all deniers—or some of them deny it and some of them say it is true, some are not sure. As I said, we have multiple oppositions.

Mr Pengilly: Prove it. Get some paperwork in this house to prove it, Tony.

Mr PICCOLO: So, you are a denier. That is good. At least you are on record saying you are a denier. That is fine.

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Be proud of the fact you are a denier.

The CHAIR: Order! This debate has been typified by too many interjections and too many responses to interjections. Can I ask the member for Light to focus on his remarks and other members to hear him in silence.

Mr Williams: You're waffling.

Mr PICCOLO: Waffling?

The CHAIR: The member for Light.

Members interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: I'm a waste of space?

The CHAIR: The member for Light.

Mr Kenyon interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: When I have the floor, I will continue.

The CHAIR: The member for Light has the floor. Others will remain silent.

Mr PICCOLO: Labor has faith in our regional communities and is committed to building on the great strides we have already taken together in the last eight years. In particular, tremendous opportunities exist in the areas of sustainable development of the food, wine and mineral resource industries as well as exploiting the emerging opportunities for creating green jobs associated with renewable energy technologies and assisting the regions to adapt to the changing climate—except in Finnis where it will not happen. Some of our core achievements—and, unfortunately, I do not have time to go through them all—

Mr Williams: Yes, you have plenty of time. Get on with it.

The CHAIR: Order, the member for MacKillop! The member for Light will continue.

Mr PICCOLO: The unemployment rate in regional South Australia has fallen from 6.6 per cent under the Liberals to 3.9 per cent under Labor, with the creation of over 38,000 jobs in just seven years. The regional population has increased by 1.3 per cent. Since the 2002-03 budget, we have spent \$658 million on regional roads. Since 2006, we have resurfaced around 2,953 lane kilometres of rural roads. In the 2009-10 budget, an additional \$23 million over the next four years was allocated for the Rural Road Safety Program.

The 2009-10 budget investment in regional South Australia is focused on supporting jobs and continuing with record infrastructure investment—I emphasise that: record infrastructure investment—in education,

housing, health, sustainability and rural road safety.