



Adjournment Debate

30 October 2001

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I congratulate Sir Eric and Lady Neal on the completion of Sir Eric's term as Governor of South Australia, and for the leadership that they have displayed. Both have endeared themselves to every Eyre Peninsula community that they have visited—and that was most of them. Their friendliness, compassion and caring attitude have made their visits to the small regional towns of South Australia an enduring memory for all who have met them. I look forward to welcoming Marjorie Jackson as our new Governor and to inviting her to visit as soon as her busy schedule will allow.

The people of South Australia are experiencing the benefits that a Liberal government has delivered. The business indexes show that business confidence levels amongst small and medium businesses in South Australia have increased. Small business confidence in this state is among the highest in the nation. The National Australia Bank report also indicates that South Australia's economy is leading the nation. These are interesting points that all would do well to note as this state is the only state Liberal government at present.

This turnaround in the way in which businesses perceive this state is not accidental. It is the result of Liberal policy that encourages individual initiative and private enterprise. Compare this to eight years ago when people were dispirited and depressed, with little hope for a bright future, and when the state was burdened with debt.

Probably the most notable achievement of the Liberal government is the contract to complete the Adelaide-Darwin rail connection, which will ensure the Olsen Government's place in history. The possibilities that the railway raises for Eyre Peninsula are many. It will be exciting to see how these unfold in the years ahead.

The Marine Science Centre—a campus of Flinders University in Port Lincoln—is a distinctive success. It has expanded since it was established about five years ago and has now outgrown the facilities and site. Port Lincoln is the premier fishing port in Australia. It is appropriate that this research and teaching campus is located at Port Lincoln. Its growth confirms the need for such a discipline at university level and the benefits that come to the many industries allied with fishing and seafood.

No amount of money can provide initiative and enterprise. While talking about all things marine, it is opportune to mention a successful business in Port Lincoln that has been built on these two characteristics. I refer to South Australia Seahorse Marine Services, established by Tracy and David Warland. This is the only seahorse breeding farm on mainland Australia, and it has achieved export status. A major delivery was recently lost as a result of the attack on America. The order, worth in the vicinity of \$7 000, was on a plane that was diverted because of the horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. The tragedy also affected a shipment of southern bluefin tuna en route to the United States. The shipment was stranded in Korea when flights to Los Angeles were cancelled. It is yet another reminder that we are now an interdependent global village. What affects one nation affects us all in many different ways.

I look with pride at the government's achievements in health, education and power. There are 10 hospitals in my electorate. Uncertainty reigned when the Liberals came to office because of the Labor government's process of closing rural hospitals. These 10 hospitals continue to operate, serving their isolated communities plus the through traffic on major highways and tourists. The hospitals have developed integrated systems of regional management. Many have formed clusters to assist in providing better service and value for money to our remote populations. I am delighted at the millions of dollars that have gone into upgrading and renovating our hospitals and extending the aged care facilities in many of them.

The government acknowledged the isolation of the Eyre Highway and the difficulty in transporting accident victims. Therefore it widened selected sites on the highway to service airstrips for Royal Flying Doctor planes. This is just one of the ways in which this government has lifted the quality of life for people in rural and regional South Australia.

It was great news when the Minister for Human Services, Dean Brown, announced more training positions in South Australia for general practitioners. There are now 35 registrar positions for general practice training in South Australia during 2001 compared with 26 in 1999—12 in the metropolitan area and 23 in regional areas. The hyperbaric unit at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, marking the start of the hospital's \$74 million redevelopment, is valued on Eyre Peninsula. With so much professional and recreational diving undertaken, the unit is an essential component of our health system.

The education budget has increased significantly since 1994. Teaching of trades has been reintroduced. Literacy and numeracy are taken seriously, with basic skills tests assisting targeted remedial attention. Those who denigrate this government while trying to score points for other political parties do a grave disservice to all teachers, staff and volunteers who work with our children to give us the best education standard. School newsletters from across Eyre Peninsula regularly make favourable comparisons between our system and others interstate and overseas that they have visited.

Liberal governments look to the future. That is why this government has highlighted the need for every student to be computer literate. The computer program in South Australian schools is the best in Australia and the proportion of computers to students is better than in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Partnerships 21 has provided rural schools with the freedom to adjust spending to their specific needs. One example comes from Elliston Area School. The cost for country children to attend events in Adelaide, whether for sport or study, is frequently prohibitive. Elliston Area School has used the freedom given by Partnerships 21 to assist students who have achieved at state level to be able to participate in events in Adelaide. It is a great incentive for students to put in that extra effort.

The state Liberal government, in cooperation with the federal Liberal government, has achieved good things in the sphere of the environment. Land salinity is one of the areas that has been tackled successfully. It is awesome to see a bare salt scald rehabilitated to the extent where it is covered in grass. The work that is being done on Eyre Peninsula in a cooperative effort between landowners, councils, departments and the government is among the best in Australia. Visitors come from interstate to learn what can be done, to see the results and to glean ideas for their own regions.

I mentioned before that Port Lincoln is the premier fishing port in Australia. The growth of the seafood industries under a government that encourages initiative and enterprise is phenomenal. We on Eyre Peninsula live in a paradise when it comes to the range, availability and freshness of the seafood we enjoy. Aquaculture continues to expand, with the development of onshore projects. Fisheries exports were up 14.1 per cent in the last financial year. They were part of the record performance that saw the state's exports at \$8.3 billion, topping the \$8 billion mark for the first time. South Australia outperformed the national average by 23 per cent.

For the opposition and some other groups, power supplies in this state have become an issue only in the past few months. The opposition stance is questionable when it is remembered that it sold the Port Augusta Power Station to international interests during its term in office. Electricity infrastructure and generation was in a sad state of neglect when this government assumed office in December 1993. I applaud the maintenance program that the Liberal government put in place that saw powerlines on Eyre Peninsula upgraded and support generators installed at Port Lincoln, but years of neglect, especially when the government was so constrained by its legacy of debt, are not quickly overcome.

The electricity industry has three components: generation, distribution and consumption. New South Wales and Victoria, about three years ago, generated more power than was consumed, hence low prices in those states. The situation has changed. Consumption has risen, so too have prices in those states. New South Wales constituents now contribute about \$100 million a year to the state-owned power provider rather than it being a revenue raiser for their government. The South Australian Liberal government recognised the need to increase power generation and therefore established Pelican Point, an action that was opposed by opposition and minor party members.

Power consumption in South Australia has risen dramatically over the past few years. The increase in consumption comes about because of the improvement in the state's economy—more people with jobs, more money and more confidence in the future. The sale of air-conditioning units, big users of electricity, jumped again last summer. In Port Lincoln, commercial freezer units have been increasing rapidly and will again this year with another large increase in the pilchard quota. I have been working on power generation through wind farming on Eyre Peninsula for more than seven years and I am delighted that the government is supporting this method of sustainable energy. The first farm on Eyre Peninsula now has approval, with more to be approved soon.

We are a government and a party that looks to the future and plans for the future. The state Liberal government has taken the hard decisions that are in the best interests of South Australia and our people. Rather than becoming a high taxing, profligate government, we have divested projects to private enterprise where appropriate. One of these is the action that has been taken on the sale of Ports Corp.

Motion carried