



SA Citizen of the Year

13 March 2001

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): It is a recorded fact that rural people do much more voluntary work than their metropolitan counterparts, yet recognition of their efforts is rare. It was a proud moment therefore when Wendy Holman was announced as South Australian Citizen of the Year in this year—the centenary of Federation.

Cummins is a service town for the surrounding agricultural districts. Societal changes have been well documented over the past decade or so, and have hit rural regions particularly hard. Rather than complaining and lamenting the change, the response from some in this district was to sit down and work out what could be done. An enterprise committee was formed in Cummins to research and initiate ventures that would benefit the town and the district. Wendy was a foundation member of the committee when it was formed in 1995 and has served as chairperson for three of the five years of the committee's existence.

One of the first projects was to set up the Cummins Kalamazoo Classic—a festival based around the railway that has been a significant factor in the history and development of the town and the district. The principal event is the kalamazoo race. Teams handpump the rail vehicle (the kalamazoo) over a set stretch of track, the winner being the team that covers the distance in the shortest time. The event is unique and demonstrates the innovation and enterprise for which the rural communities are noted.

The Cummins Kalamazoo Classic was judged the 1999 state event of the year and has attracted wide positive publicity to our region. Its success highlighted another need for the town—a caravan park to cater for the visitors. The enterprise committee and the Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council are working together on this project. I am sure that the result will be equally successful as the kalamazoo classic.

One by one, the major banks have withdrawn their branches from Cummins. This was a particular blow to the to business people who, as a consequence, had to drive a round trip of 150 kilometres to bank money or obtain cash in Port Lincoln. But, again, the people did not sit on their collective hands and bewail their loss: they looked around for alternatives. Wendy Holman, along with Leo Haarsma, Jeff Pearson and many others, started negotiations with Bendigo Bank to open a branch in Cummins. The Cummins Community Bank opened for business late last year.

Wendy's service to the district began 28 years ago, when she was sent to the town as a school teacher at the Cummins Area School. She also became one of the bus drivers who each day travel long distances picking up and setting down students. She has edited a book produced by Cummins writers and has worked closely with the Eyre Regional Development Board. Her immediate future will be taken up with developing and implementing a youth plan. Country youth do not have the amenities and entertainments that are laid on for metropolitan youth. I must pay tribute here to the state government's active club grants scheme that allocates gaming revenue to recreational facilities that benefit rural communities so much.

The *Advertiser* printed an excellent front page article on Wendy's award on 27 January 2001. The story was uplifting and inspirational—just the kind of thing to present our country regions and their particularly special people in a good light to those who never venture far from the city limits. Unfortunately, there is a down side to all this good news. This wonderful story was printed on the front page, only in the rural edition of the *Advertiser*. City editions had a much smaller article buried on an inside page, while the front page article was yet another sad report—this one of three deaths on the Murray River. If it is a choice between a good news story that might lift people's spirits and a sad and depressing one, why does it always have to be the latter? The *Advertiser* had an opportunity to present to the people of this state a positive and successful

approach to dealing with problems in rural areas. Metropolitan communities too are not immune from downturns in their regions and would have benefited from a greater exposure to Wendy Holman's award and the achievements of the Cummins community.

My blood boils every time the country is relegated to the position of also-ran, to a situation where the country is grudgingly acknowledged as being there but unimportant and unworthy of positive recognition. We in the country are fortunate that our citizens work voluntarily for their communities without seeking public acclaim, yet the country and metropolitan Adelaide together make up the state of South Australia. I congratulate all the wonderful people who gained recognition in the awards, and particularly Wendy Holman, Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council under the chairmanship of Bill Watkins and the many people whom Wendy has acknowledged as having played a part in her award as the Citizen of the Year for the whole of South Australia.