



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

SPEECH

Wednesday, 26 February 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Champion, Nick, MP	Question No.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (17:59): It is a great pleasure to speak in the debate. I begin just by thanking electors for returning me here. It is always good to be re-elected, I have got to say. I have all the people of Salisbury, Elizabeth, the Adelaide Plains, Clare and Gilbert valleys, Barossa and all the wheat-belt towns like Kapunda, where I grew up, Balaklava, Owen and Hamley Bridge and a whole lot in between to thank for that, and I thank them sincerely. I also want to put on the record my thanks to Aemon Bourke and Glenn Armstrong who managed my campaign, and of course my long-suffering electorate staff members: Mat Werfel, Rob Klose, Nimfa Farrell, and Caleb Flight—who has just become a father for the first time—Susan Cunningham and Awa Chibikwa. It is terrific to have all of my staff continuing with me and helping me along what it is a difficult path in political life. I would also like to thank all the volunteers that assisted me during the campaign. There are always too many to thank in one speech and it is, of course, easier to give a blanket thank you for fear of missing anybody out.

I have also got to thank my opponent Tom Zorich. Tom and I do go a way back, both as supporters of the Central District footy club. Tom was a former president of the Central District footy club and I know that he will be active in the local area and is always concerned with the local area. While we had our political differences, I wish him all the best.

The big issue in the campaign and in my electorate at the moment is of course the exit of Holden from car manufacturing in Australia and with them the exit of the components industry and the jobs crisis that will eventually hit South Australia. It is a slow-motion wrecking ball. You can be tempted to think that Holden has made their announcement and there does not seem to be much impact yet. But that is because we are yet to feel the true impact of the redundancies, the loss of economic activity and the slow wind-down. We see that not just in Elizabeth but also in Geelong and Altona and in places like that—anywhere where there is a components industry. Fifty thousand jobs are going, all intimately connected with one another.

We have seen this government abandon SPC. Fortunately, the Victorian government took up the role that would normally be played by federal government. And we now see that Qantas, in order to get any assistance at all, are basically being told to declare war yet again on their workforce, as they have done once before. It always startles me to see the government take this approach. My theory is that we will see the end of the national carrier, and of course it is the people in the regions who will suffer most of all from the process.

The economy of northern Adelaide is the manufacturing heartland traditionally, where both the jobs and the export driver of the whole of Adelaide have been located. I fear for that economy's integrity as we go forward, particularly from 2017 when a lot of the construction that is currently happening around South Australia will stop. We have the spectre of both a state and federal Liberal government potentially and I think that would bring a startling halt to infrastructure development in South Australia. We would have a jobs crisis in Holden, in infrastructure and in our shipbuilding as well, potentially dumping a lot of good, hardworking blue-collar workers out into the labour market all at one time and really changing the economic circumstances that South Australia has fought so hard to get—that is, economic diversification.

Clearly, we do need to be very careful about assessing the fears and the circumstances that we are in and there is the issue of confidence. I do not want to alarm people. We need people to be aware and we need action because of that awareness, but as Mr Stanley Chapley who owns the Munno Para shopping centres where my office is based has warned, talking down the north's economy could lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. We do need to be very careful of that. The north has weathered many storms in the past and it is interesting when we look at this debate whether we have clear analysis, awareness and action or whether we have hysteria.

I notice that there is an advertisement in the *Bunyip* today targeting Tony Piccolo. It is quoting a youth unemployment rate for northern Adelaide with the sorts of hysterics that the Liberal Party threw at me during the election, and recently threw at me with Senator Sean Edwards in the Senate making speeches there and releasing

press releases about what I might do about youth unemployment, forgetting entirely that Tony Abbott is the Prime Minister, that the Liberal Party are in government, that they have chased Holden out of the country and, with that a whole components industry. One would not think that that is a good way of going about things.

We know that in the northern areas we have had a problem with youth unemployment going back at least to my childhood and probably beyond, possibly going right back to the 1970s when the textiles industry and the car industry began to shrink. So throwing numbers around and using political advertisements and pointing the finger at one another, is not particularly productive. It is a sort of game you can play, I suppose, but I do not think that it helps anybody. If people care to do a search, there are press releases from ministers and shadow ministers of both parties where basically you could transpose the scripts or the figures.

What we really need is less finger-pointing, particularly by the government, and more action. That is my great fear: we have had this terrible crisis and we have had a government that is issuing ultimatums to companies—playing chicken with multinational companies—basically daring them to leave. These are matters that I have brought up many times in this House. But where is the replacement plan for the regions that are devastated by these big economic shifts that have been brought on by the government—brought on by the government, accelerated by the government and cheered on by the government? Where is the replacement plan?

It disturbs me, frankly, that when I talk to people around the place—important people who have ideas about what we might do with our local economy and how we might diversify and transform it—that the government is only just starting to take hearings on this. You would have thought that if they had had some advice about the car industry or if they had had an intention about the car industry—and they have been in government for six months now, so they have had plenty of time to think about it—there should have been, one would imagine, in an incoming government brief, something for them to have a bit of a think about what kind of jobs plan they were going to have to fix this up. You would have thought they would have started having preliminary discussions with councils about economic diversification to strengthen local economies in the anticipation of this crisis that they, the government, have brought on.

To help the government, I am happy to outline some projects in the local area which may assist them. The City of Playford has a number of them, the first being the Playford Regional Sports Precinct. This incorporates the Central Districts Football Club, which I mentioned before, and also, potentially, a school oval for Kaurna Plains and the Fremont-Elizabeth City High School. It also incorporates a number of playing fields stretching all the way from the Philip Highway up to Main North Road.

This sports precinct would be all about encouraging youth and other people to get involved in sports and recreation, not just as a leisure pursuit but, of course, as a career and a job as well. It is not just a big infrastructure spend, in terms of jobs—and that is a direct spinoff from that—but there are plans for ongoing traineeships and bringing sports organisations to headquarter in Elizabeth and the like, with the relocation of netball and tennis there. They are all important things; it is an important local infrastructure project. The council has done all the planning and it is ready to go, so there should be no barrier to the government getting on board with that project.

The important thing about the tennis courts now is that the Lyell McEwin Hospital is in the electorate—and it is probably one of the biggest employers outside of Defence and automotive. That hospital was, of course, named after Sir Lyell McEwin, a minister in the Playford government, back in the good old days when you could name a hospital after yourself. The tennis courts are directly behind the Lyell McEwin Hospital. If we can relocate the tennis courts then all of that land can be used for a health precinct. I think there is a great opportunity there to have medical training, research institutes and a health economy built at Lyell McEwin Hospital. That would trigger development in an adjacent shopping centre and in the local area. So you would have a big jobs spinoff by the creation of a sports precinct and a health precinct.

I think that one of the good things that we could do—and I hope that there would be some bipartisan support for this—would be to put a soldier recovery centre at that health precinct. I think we will have in the future many veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder and other issues, and they should know that there is a place that is friendly with the military and open to their experience as veterans, but somewhere they can access as civilians. I think that would be a very good thing to pursue and to think about. I notice Minister Robert busily looking at his briefs at the table, but he may get a letter from me about such matters and I hope he would treat it seriously.

I have had a number of dealings with Mr Craig Hansen, who is a veteran, a survivor of an IED blast. He has now been discharged from the military and is getting on with his life. We want to make sure that people like Craig Hansen, who have served our country diligently and with bravery, get the best possible treatment. Despite the events of today, I think that we do have to be mindful that the ADF has had a very busy time, operationally, and we have many veterans who have served in Iraq, East Timor or Afghanistan on multiple deployments. We need to be serious about their treatment when they get home.

In terms of economic development, we also need to put back in place some of the projects that have been lost for one reason or another. Again, it is one of those areas where we can probably point the finger at one another, but in my opinion bringing back on the Adelaide to Gawler rail line electrification is a very important project for jobs and a very important project for South Australia. We hope that the government would consider it. Even if they do not want to be in public transport and rail, the state government has indicated that they are prepared to take it to Salisbury. It does not make much sense to have electric trains going to Salisbury and not then to Gawler. That federal funding that was ripped away by this government needs to be put back into the system.

The South Australian government, of course, delayed the project, and I think that was unfortunate. But we need to get that project back on track. It makes sense, because it would create hundreds of construction jobs at a time when South Australia will need construction jobs. We should also look, I think, in parallel at building the Northern Connector. It is a very important road that will connect the Northern Expressway up with the South Road Superway. That is very important to get freight to the port and to the Barossa Valley quickly. It would be a major economic contributor and obviously would have a big impact in terms of the infrastructure spend. Most importantly, it would get the freight trains out of Salisbury—the very fast moving trains that go through the centre of Salisbury now would be diverted and would be able to go through at great speed on tracks that are not in urban areas.

I think there are great opportunities there and great opportunities for synergy. It would also allow intermodal projects to develop around the Penfield area. When we were last in government we provided a \$7 million grant to SCT to build the Penfield rail freight centre. It is going to create between 300 and 350 jobs, and about 50 jobs in construction on top of that. I got a project update from SCT the other day. There is really important work going on out there. Electrical conduits have now been installed. For the container pad the civil works have commenced. There are rail track activities. They have purchased the necessary rail componentry for the project. There is early work to facilitate the construction of the container park and the stormwater infrastructure has largely been put in.

That is a very important project. We gave funding for that probably nine months ago now and you can see it now developing. Those jobs will start to come online and compensate for some of the job losses. That is a very important project. If we have the Northern Connector going, we will see the development of intermodals up and down that line. There is another one at Balco at Bowmans up near Balaklava. That is a very important project that I give my support to. It is important to create some safe places to store hazardous goods, like fertiliser, far away from urban centres where they are now stored. The state government is supporting that project and has given them a grant to facilitate the growth of that idea.

There are also a lot of opportunities in horticulture development. That requires basically two things: water and power infrastructure to the Adelaide Plains. When in government we began important projects in water, particularly waterproofing Gawler and creating similar aquifer projects to those that exist in Salisbury and Elizabeth. Basically, it is water for industrial and council use and linking in with the Barossa irrigation scheme. It is particularly important to get all the schemes linked. If we can do that, that will provide water security up and down the whole of northern Adelaide, into the Barossa Valley and potentially for horticultural development on the Adelaide Plains. Developing the Adelaide Plains and bringing Bolivar water to those areas are critical for the creation of wealth. That will create a lot of jobs that can be utilised by school leavers, mature-age workers, migrants and the like. Actually very large numbers of jobs can be created in the horticulture industry, particularly in modern, sophisticated glasshouses.

So there is tremendous opportunity there. It does not have to be a partisan thing. When we come to developing the economic diversification plans to overcome some of the unfortunate and terrible actions regarding the automotive industry we should be bipartisan in the creation of jobs. I hope South Australia does not face a jobs cliff in 2017, 2018 or 2019. I hope the government acts with some urgency and starts to plan for jobs growth for northern Adelaide, knowing that it is the jobs, exports and economic wealth generator for the whole state of South Australia.