



GIVING FARMERS A VOICE ON PLANNING ISSUES

*Planning, Development and Infrastructure
(Constitution of Commission) Amendment
Bill 2021*

A BILL FOR

*An Act to amend the Planning,
Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light): Mr Speaker this is a very simple bill. It has one clause, so there is not a lot to debate about this bill. While it is a simple bill, I think it is a very important bill which deals with a matter of great concern to people living in rural areas. Based on the feedback I have received from people in my own electorate, particularly when my electorate went as far as the Light River, but also in the electorate of Schubert for which I am the duty member—and this is a matter that has been raised with me on a number of occasions—it is now an opportunity to

correct what I believe is an omission from the act.

This bill seeks to ensure that the South Australian Planning Commission has people on that commission with expertise in rural land use or agriculture. This is not a reflection on the existing membership. The existing membership I think are very talented people, but the rules that allow for people to be appointed to the commission do not include or require people with rural land use or agricultural skills to be part of that commission.

The existing commission has expertise across a broad range of disciplines, including planning, urban design or architecture—and certainly the new commission chair has that experience. I believe that Helen Dyer is an excellent choice for chair of the commission. She has a great deal of experience in both local government and consulting, and she understands the industry well.

There are people with expertise in economics, commerce or finance; development or building construction; the provision or management of infrastructure or transport systems; social or environmental policy or science; and local government, public administration or law. These are outlined in clause 18 of the PDI Act. All are relevant disciplines that should be represented on the commission.

An area that I think is omitted in the commission's skill set is people with an understanding of rural land use or agriculture, and certainly that is an important area. What is quite clear is the increasing importance of the capacity to have a very efficient agricultural system in this state. As the demand for food grows exponentially around the world, we need to be able to grow food in this state to make sure that we can feed our own population, but also make a contribution to feeding the world's population.

There are at the margins a lot of conflicts between urban development and rural land use. The reality also is that, when the policies are drawn up, there is a lack of expertise on the commission to ensure that the policies that are put in place have a full understanding of rural land use and agriculture. Also, it is important to have people understanding rural land use and agriculture because, within the primary industries sector itself there could be conflicts of land uses. Often, if they are not fully understood, what people think you can lump together as rural land uses are in conflict and do

diminish one type of activity against the other.

I am sure people who live in rural areas have an understanding of that. For example, sometimes there is a conflict between viticulture and agriculture. Those sorts of things the commission may not understand because it needs people with expertise on the commission to understand that. We need to make sure that planning policies, when it comes to rural areas, are well understood, and having that sort of skill set on the commission would be very useful.

The position has been deliberately designed as a part-time commissioner, and this person will be required to sit as a commissioner and influence policy at those times when it is required. When you are dealing with urban development, of course it is not required, but once you start to look at the peri-urban, agricultural or rural areas it would be very helpful to make sure that there are people on the commission—who advise, who decide the policy, who advise ministers—who have that expertise and background.

At the moment, there is no legislative requirement to ensure that that expertise exists on the commission. There is no prohibition, but equally there is no positive statement to say that that experience and expertise should exist. One of the reasons this is required is that planning policy is, by its very nature, a vexed area of public policy and we need to get it right every

time. Poor public policy in the area of planning and development can have long-term negative impacts on our community, our society and our economy.

As I said, based on the feedback I have received from a number of people whose livelihood is based on rural land use, I think this addition to the commission would be a worthy one and worthy of support. While I think that the current commission does a good job and is worthy of the positions, I think it should be expanded to include that experience. With those few comments, I commend the bill to the house.