

House of Assembly

Grievance

26 May, 2010

TRADESTART PROGRAM

Mr TRELOAR (Flinders) (15:11): I rise today to speak on the very disappointing admission by the state government yesterday that the TradeStart office in Port Lincoln will close. By way of background, TradeStart is a federal Austrade program administered in partnership with the state government and specifically aimed at assisting regional exporters in developing links with international markets.

This closure unfortunately means that businesses in Port Lincoln and on Eyre Peninsula will no longer have access to an export adviser as part of the TradeStart program. This is a significant blow to small and medium-sized enterprises (or SMEs, as they are commonly referred to), those small and medium-sized enterprises that wish to develop and enter overseas markets, particularly in the agriculture, food and aquaculture sections.

This can only be described as a huge setback to export growth in my electorate of Flinders and, indeed, the whole state. Make no mistake: this will hurt businesses in my electorate, and that in turn hurts the export growth generated by the engine room of the regional economy. I am well aware that this government does not understand the importance of our primary producers, including farmers, fishermen and minors, the vast majority of whom export into a globalised world economy earning valuable export income for the state.

The Premier promised the people of South Australia, during the state election campaign, that only he could get the best deal from his mate Kevin Rudd and the federal Labor government. Only he could do the hard yards and negotiate for this state. This situation has shown that promise for all it is worth, and the people of this state will be the judges of how the relationship between federal Labor and this state Labor government is panning out. I can say in this instance that the exporters of Flinders have been duded.

I would like to turn briefly to the farcical situation that occurred in question time yesterday. The Minister for Industry and Trade was asked a couple of very straightforward questions on this very topic: the closure of the TradeStart office in Port Lincoln. He was asked how many direct and indirect jobs are to be lost and how many programs are to be cut and at what cost as a result of the government's confirmation that the TradeStart office in Port Lincoln is to be closed.

What followed from the minister (the Hon. Tom Koutsantonis) was one of the most embarrassing and ill-conceived—

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order.

Mr Treloar interjecting:

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: Point of order. You can sit down now.

The SPEAKER: Point of order. The member should be seated.

The Hon. A. KOUTSANTONIS: I know that the member for Flinders is young and inexperienced. I am here to help. I'm from the government; I'm here to help. He is using my name rather than my title, and, in this place, I would ask that he refers to me as the member for West Torrens or minister.

The SPEAKER: I will uphold that point of order, but he did say minister, I understand.

Mr TRELOAR: Correct, Madam Speaker. At no point did the minister even come close to addressing the substance of the question. Instead, he chose to go off on some ill-conceived diatribe about the federal Liberal opposition. This just goes to show that this government is as arrogant and out of touch as they have ever been, and South Australians are sick of this sort of political posturing. What they want is a government that can be held to account.

Exports have plummeted under this Rann Labor government from \$9.1 billion in 2002 to \$7.9 billion today. The closure of the Port Lincoln TradeStart office is just another slap in the face for the exporters in Flinders, and it goes to show that both the federal and state Labor governments have no

regard for anything outside of the city limits. Nor do they show any comprehension of the extraordinary contribution that our regions make to this state's economy. In fact, they are well on the way to killing the goose.

I was, however, given just a glimmer of hope in all of this, when a spokesperson from the minister's office stated yesterday that our state government will lodge a bid with the federal government to take over the TradeStart services. I sincerely hope that the outcome—

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr TRELOAR: I sincerely hope—

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Industry and Trade will let the member speak.

Mr TRELOAR: Once again, minister, we will need to check *Hansard* to find out exactly what the minister said.

The Hon. A. Koutsantonis interjecting:

Mr TRELOAR: I do it every day. I sincerely hope that the outcome from this bid will be the reinstatement of the Port Lincoln office. I look forward to continuing encouragement of small and medium-size enterprises looking to break into export market places.