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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

McLaren Vale Region

SPEECH

Monday, 19 October 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 19 October 2009 Page 11 Questioner Speaker Rishworth, Amanda, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (8.58 pm)—I rise today in this grievance debate to talk firstly about some of the strengths of the McLaren Vale region in my electorate but also about some of the challenges that this region faces and some of the areas in which it could really be helped. The area of McLaren Vale and associated areas of Willunga and Blewitt Springs are going from strength to strength. McLaren Vale is the gateway to the Fleurieu Peninsula and is home to some fantastic wines and foods and a spectacular coastline. I am always happy to boast about the success of the wines produced in the McLaren Vale region and sold at 76 local cellar doors dotted throughout the region. In fact, McLaren Vale is home to 9.8 per cent of the nation's grape and wine output. This is a significant contribution to both the nation and our local state of South Australia's economy. The area does not just produce a quantity of wine, though; it produces wine of significant quality, with many small family owned vineyards making world-class, world-renowned wine that punches above its weight. In addition to this there are many boutique wines. I was very pleased to attend recently the Vale Cru Expo, which showcased a lot of small-batch, high-quality winemakers. A great day was had by all. A high quality of wine was on display here, but other wine in the region is also renowned.

The region is not just thinking about what they do well in the present, they are also talking about what they can do in the future. I was very pleased a few weeks ago to represent the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, to launch the McLaren Vale generational farming sustainability project, which aims to build on the region's reputation for sustainable environmental practice. The launch was held at Oliver's Taranga Vineyard, which is an example of real generational farming having had five generations that have participated in the vineyard.

Already this region has been struck by drought. However, with the assistance of both state and federal governments but most importantly the industry—they are not just complaining about drought; they are not just saying, 'What can we do?'—they have moved to use recycled water from the Christies beach wastewater treatment plant to ensure that their crops grow. The generational farming project that I launched will further this by encouraging sustainable wine-growing practices in the McLaren Vale region by implementing an environmental benchmarking system for wine production. I have been informed this is the first attempt to do this anywhere in Australia. It will allow wine growers to self-record and assess their environmental performances according to their management of pest and disease, soil and weeds, water, biodiversity, waste and carbon pollution as well as continuing education for farmers on this issue. The objective of the project is to encourage sustainable wine-growing practice that will allow for farmers to pass their vineyards on to the next generation in better condition.

The community backed project is a good example of an industry-led initiative from the wine industry to address issues of sustainability, and it should be commended. I certainly add my voice to commending this. Furthermore, the project is in line with the government's policy of working with industry to build its capacity to respond to current environmental and economic challenges. Not only is this a forward-looking project for improving the environment but it is also critical to carving out a niche for McLaren Vale in the world wine market. As consumers around the world become more conscious of the impact that their purchasing choice will have, being certified sustainable will be another defining feature—not just the good quality of the wine—of McLaren Vale wine. This is an important project that locals will reap the benefit from.

McLaren Vale and the surrounding areas is not just known for its wine; it is also known for its great olive oil. We recently had the Prime Minister's country task force meet down in McLaren Vale where we heard from olive growers firsthand on the significant export markets that they send to. They also have their challenges but they are doing a particularly important job in the region. In addition, the Willunga farmers market has recently been awarded the most outstanding farmers market in the country in the 2009 Vogue Entertaining and Travel Produce Awards. The Willunga farmers market draws on local produce from around the area, everything fruit, vegies, flowers, cheese, olive oil, bread—and that is just the start. The market has recently celebrated its seventh birthday and is going from strength to strength.

The region is also developing as a force in agri tourism. I was very pleased to visit with the minister for agriculture the Producers, which is one of these businesses in the electorate. This is a B and B that not only immerses visitors in the process of wine making—you can go there and make your own wine—but you can press your own olive oil; you can preserve fruits of the farm; you can learn how to bake and learn cheese making. This is an experience that connects people with the local area and the local food. We have an amazing area for wine, for food and for tourism. The region is going from strength to strength.

There are some challenges, though, and as this is a grievance debate I will highlight them. McLaren Vale is very close to the metropolitan area. As Adelaide has grown, the metropolitan boundaries have come closer and closer. We need to ensure that this unique tourism and wine-growing area is protected and does not become part of the urban sprawl. It is very important that we protect the horticultural areas of McLaren Vale to ensure long-term sustainability. I have previously placed that on public record in this place, and I do so again to reiterate its importance. I am pleased that the state government's recent development plan for the region will examine ways to reinforce the long-term protection of this unique South Australian landscape. I would urge the state government to ensure that any solution especially protects this region, including the Bowering Hill site, from urban encroachment.

Another issue that has been raised with me is the naming of the region. In the South Australia tourism brochures, the region of McLaren Vale and the Fleurieu Peninsula is called the Fleurieu Peninsula, as that describes the majority of the area. But the people in McLaren Vale are presenting the McLaren Vale brand to the country and the world in their wine, and they feel that there is a mismatch between the Fleurieu Peninsula, which is considered a tourism region, and McLaren Vale, which is considered a wine-growing region, when in fact they are one and the same area. So they have expressed their wish that we look at combining 'McLaren Vale' and 'Fleurieu Peninsula' in the name of the region. It has certainly been done in other wine regions in South Australia. For example, the Barossa Valley and the Clare Valley are both wine-growing region and tourism regions. McLaren Vale growers are looking at incorporating into the name of the region the brand that they present to the world. It certainly seems to me like a sensible idea, and I will continue to work with them to see whether we can achieve that.

McLaren Vale and the associated areas of Willunga and Blewitt Springs are a beautiful part of the electorate. Although they do face some challenges, such as drought, urban encroachment and marketing themselves, this area will go from strength to strength. I would encourage members, staff and anyone else in this place to visit at any time. There will certainly be people welcoming them there.