



Federal Opposition spokesperson for Veterans Affairs and Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce and Member for Hammond, Adrian Pederick look forward to seeing the work being done by Fleurieu Community Co-operative General Manager, Grant List and others on the Strathalbyn Abattoir. Photos: Giorgina McKay

Former Deputy Prime Minister takes a tour through Mayo



By Giorgina McKay

Understanding the challenges facing rural and regional South Australians was the subject of a rare visit by former Deputy Prime Minister and former Nationals Party leader, Barnaby Joyce through Mayo last Thursday.

The Federal Opposition spokesperson for Veterans Affairs joined his state counterpart and Member for Hammond, Adrian Pederick, South Australian Senator Anne Ruston, and Legislative Council member, Laura Henderson to meet with community members to discuss local issues such as the Murray Darling Basin and cost of living challenges, and hear from businesses making innovations in the agricultural sector.

Mr Joyce told *The Southern Argus* it was important to be informed about other electorates, particularly those in rural and regional areas.

"With Adrian, Laura and Anne, I'm here to get around and make sure we're aware of what's happening in the Fleurieu Peninsula, so we're better informed in Canberra and can do what we can to assist," he said.

"In politics you can be lazy or work, and work means getting around your electorate and the nation, and understanding what the issues are, so when we get back to Canberra, you're informed and you can help put your shoulder to their wheel if required to progress the issues that are important to them.

"Otherwise, you're doing it from some sort of mystical basis because you've never been there or seen it, and don't know what it's about.

"In any portfolio you hold, you're not going to mystically develop a policy for the Australian people at the next election if you haven't done your ground work, and this is part of making sure we do that."

The first stop on the tour was Swanport Harvest's Don Ruggiero's Langhorne Creek farm, where the group learned about his lettuce operations and current labour workforce challenges, before stopping by the Strathalbyn Abattoir to hear the latest updates on its redevelopment from the Fleurieu Community Co-operative.

"(The abattoir) is a line of sight to a project, which ultimately, I hope is successful and will assist people get a better price, better standard of living, and better bang for their



Member for Hammond, Adrian Pederick; former Deputy Prime Minister and Nationals Party leader, Barnaby Joyce; Senator Anne Ruston and Legislative Council member, Laura Henderson at the developing Strathalbyn Abattoir during a tour through Mayo last Thursday.

buck," Mr Joyce said.

"It's like the TARDIS – it looks better on the inside than does it on the outside – but I hear they're finishing around Christmas, which will be great.

"(There's) a lot of work in front of them to get there, (but it's) good to see the support.

"I genuinely – because I'm in the game – wish them all the very best because the greater success they have, the greater price we get, and who wouldn't want that?"

Later that day, the group met with and received feedback from local veterans and residents.

Mr Joyce felt it was an informative visit, as did Ms Ruston.

She noted farmers currently faced many challenges, and hearing first-hand about them would help the group advocate for change in parliament.

"It's just fantastic to have the opportunity to have somebody with the kind of depth Barnaby has about rural and regional Australia in a rural and regional community in South Australia," Ms Ruston told *The Argus*.

"There are some pretty big challenges farmers are facing at the moment, not the least is the cost of input into doing business, and we just really need to know first-hand what they are.

"The cost of energy is really crippling,

particularly when it comes to processing in agriculture, so it's great just to hear directly from the people that are incurring these costs, and facing these challenges, so we can do our best to make sure we push the policy leaders to try and give them some relief.

"Right now, the only job in town is to get inflation down and the only way we're going to (do that) is if we start dealing with the input costs that are crippling businesses across Australia, but none more so than in rural and regional Australia."

Mr Pederick agreed Mr Joyce's presence brought many benefits to Mayo residents.

"To have somebody of Barnaby's calibre down here and seeing exactly what's on the ground, whether it's to do with the river system, meat processing or veteran's affairs, I really appreciate him taking the time to come down and Anne organising it, so everyone can get a clear focus of what everyone's thinking politically and see what people are doing on the ground in whatever sector they're in," he said.

"I also think the beauty is (residents) can ask questions of Barnaby, which they don't get to do face-to-face every day.

"We can bring the leaders to the people, and that's what the people expect.

"It's about that interaction between people, and giving people that opportunity."