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Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (19:35): As this is my first speech that I will make in this place since being re-elected, I would like to take a moment to thank a few people. In my farewell speech in this place a couple of years ago, I began by thanking my family. I do the same again now. None of us could commit as we do to serving the people of Australia without the selfless support of our families. And I can see you nodding there, Mr Acting President Marshall. I would like to thank my wife, Nimfa, my daughter Emily and her partner, Lawrence, my daughter Tess and my daughter Mary and her husband, James, for their encouragement and support on my return to the Senate.

Since I last spoke in this place, Mary and James have welcomed to the family their first child and my first grandchild, Edward Donald Farrell Malycha. On Edward's next birthday he will be two. He spent most of his formative months in the United Kingdom, where other codes are king. But, as you know, Mr Acting Deputy President Marshall, it is different in Australia. He is already showing skills with an Aussie rules football—skills that, I hope, will one day see me barracking for him in the red, gold and navy of the mighty Adelaide Crows.

Senator Williams: What about the Swans?

Senator FARRELL: You can forget about the Swans, Senator Williams—forget about them. They will be history as of about 10 o'clock on Saturday night.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of my ALP colleagues Peter Malinauskas, Sonia Romeo and Reggie Martin. When you lose your Senate seat, you quickly know who your friends are. And they included Patrick Conlon and Tania Drewer, Ben Dineen and the WOD Life team.

As a proud South Australian, I am very happy to once again be representing the people of my home state in the Australian parliament. I intend to again do my very best to ensure that our great state thrives and grows. One growing region, as you would be aware, Acting Deputy President Marshall, is the Clare Valley, where, as some of you would know, I have spent a bit of time recently making some terrific wine.

Just over a week ago, I attended a function in the Clare held by Johnston Withers Lawyers, an Adelaide based firm that has a particular focus on providing services in regional centres, including Port Augusta, Whyalla, Roxby Downs and Clare itself. Along with other guests, including Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council CEO Roy Blight, I was in the audience for speeches by consultant Greg Crafter and senior lawyer Jason Bell. The former Master of the Supreme Court, Brian Withers, was also in attendance. Greg was formerly the Labor member for Norwood—he took over from Don Dunstan, you might recall, Acting Deputy President Marshall—and he was a state minister with portfolios including Minister for Local Government. He gave a particularly thought-provoking speech. It is not my intention to endorse the ideas he raised in his speech, but I would like to summarise its themes.

Greg spoke about the importance of efficient government structures in providing support to small businesses in rural and regional South Australia. He compared South Australia to the Auckland region in New Zealand, which has a similar population but has completely restructured its local government. Greg mentioned that Auckland now has one council with business units that deliver council services, rather than about 20 councils as it used to have. By comparison, South Australia has more than 70 councils. The Clare and Gilbert Valleys region has a strong local government, and, as I mentioned earlier, I am not endorsing or suggesting a program of council amalgamations. However, it is great to see smart, successful South Australians like Greg, who are actively involved in our rural communities, driving informed discussions about what we can do to strengthen our regions.

I will end by restating my intention to do everything I can through the Australian parliament to support the hardworking people of my home state, South Australia.