

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH 2012

FARMING RIGHTS

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:31): I rise to acknowledge this motion. As we have heard from the member for Schubert, and other members in this place, farming is being challenged more and more as to where it can operate and how it operates. Certainly, in relation to spray buffers, farmers are supposed to have a certain spray buffer if they are next to a new residential development, but my understanding is that these residential developments can build right up to the farmer's fence, so where is the equity in that? I do not think there is any equity.

Then we have the issue of different types of farming being next to each other, such as broadacre farming and vineyards; and there is another issue with sprays that might be safe enough to use in broadacre cropping but, obviously, will damage broadleaf plants like vines. For a long time now we have had the situation that Estericide 800 cannot be used within many kilometres of vineyards because of the inversion layer effect that can happen. It does not have to be a windy day, but the spray goes up into the atmosphere, translocates and knocks out part of a vineyard.

Farmers are well aware of their obligations, and you certainly have to take a lot of note when spraying crops. As the member for Schubert rightly said, technology has moved on so far, especially in recent years. It is expensive technology but, when you have spray equipment now with windshields so that you can spray in windier conditions and, obviously, with global positioning systems, you can spray a lot more accurately.

Everyone needs to be aware of the limitations on what farmers can do. As we have seen urban infill and encroachment of development onto our farming lands, some people do not realise what happens when they move into a farming area. I have had some issues in my electorate at Finniss where there are some small, I guess you would call them, lifestyle blocks with dried weeds accumulating in their yards, and issues like that. People need to be aware with winds and plants that dry off in the summer time that these things can happen in rural areas. So there needs to be a general understanding of what goes on in these communities.

Certainly, we recognise that both mining and farming need to coexist so that we can enjoy the wealth of this great state and what it can produce, but we need the mining companies to be far more aware of farmers' needs. It has certainly been brought to my attention up in the Mallee at Mindarie and Strathalbyn on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Certainly, up in the Mallee there were some real issues where the initial mining company, Australian Zircon, got far ahead of where they should have been and far ahead of the rehabilitation program that was supposed to be in place. They also got behind in compensation payments, and they have been behind in compensation payments for farmers that have had their land mined. Apart from the fact that the rehabilitation was a mess, people were not getting the appropriate financial recompense for what was happening on the land.

I understand there is another company about to start up there with Chinese backing. I think it is called Southern Zircon. Let's hope procedures are followed in a better way so that the miners and the farmers can get on together, because there are many, many kilometres of strands of zircon, rutile, etc., that have the potential to be mined in that area.

Everyone needs to know where they sit in the scheme of things. The farmers need to know where they fit and the miners need to know where they fit, but what I find is that sometimes one or both parties just refuse to talk. That is why SACOME and SAFF have been working through guiding principles, so that farmers and miners can work together to get the appropriate outcomes in regard to that.

I know there will always be some difficulties, but so long as people can work through it, work through the buffer zones and do it in a businesslike manner, I think we can have a win to both parties. I certainly acknowledge that this is something that needs further investigation under the select committee. I notice the member for Schubert brought up the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, and they are talking about 300-metre buffer zones around native scrub and other areas. This is just ridiculous and it shows how far removed some of these people in Canberra are from reality.

We had an issue in my electorate and around the state where they were talking about banning the use of diuron, a commonly used chemical especially used in knock down prior to seeding, because they were worried about the Barrier Reef. Well, I do not think that a 100 or 200 millilitre per hectare application of diuron at Bowhill is going to affect the Barrier Reef. I really do not think that is going to happen. There needs to be a bit of reality. I know that with regard to farming in Queensland and the higher rate they use in banana crops may have an effect, but let's get real.

While I am talking about the APVMA, we need to make sure that farmers have the right access to chemicals to control mice outbreaks. I think they are far removed from reality there as well. Farmers should be able to mix chemicals on farm in a price conscious manner instead of having to basically borrow money so that they can keep mice at bay. I think a lot of the authorities need to get in the real world. I think this is something that another part of the select committee could look into.

Far too often in this day and age we see regulatory authorities that have no real idea about what happens on the ground and no real idea of what happens with people, especially farming families who have been farming for generations. They just do what they do: they learn, they use new technology. Sadly, they do not get much extension work out of PIRSA anymore because that has been gutted by this current government, but they are using other groups like the agriculture excellence alliance groups and the no-till farming groups to ensure their farming future.

Farmers are keen to do the job; they just need to be rewarded, and they just need people to be aware of how difficult their task is. Sadly, there are some in the city who do not appreciate that and do not appreciate the contribution farmers make to this state. So, I fully recommend the establishment of this select committee and acknowledge the member for Schubert for introducing it.