

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 13TH MARCH 2012

ZERO WASTE SA (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:20): I rise today to speak to the Zero Waste SA (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2011 and acknowledge the work of the shadow minister for the environment, the member for Norwood (Steven Marshall), in taking on his first bill in the house. I congratulate him on the way he is doing that.

This bill was introduced in the lower house by minister Caica on 15 February 2012. The amendments seek to rectify some problems with the original bill because Zero Waste SA is currently not captured by the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987 and is therefore not answerable to Treasury for its financial decisions. Also, Zero Waste SA has no power for delegation of funds to carry out functions legislated in the act. Every time a decision is to be made, the department must defer to the board for confirmation, regardless of the size of the decision or the amount of money to be spent.

The first change, involving Zero Waste to be answerable under the Public Finance and Audit Act 1987, would provide more transparent information about its finances. As we have learnt with many other issues brought before this house, transparency is the key so that everyone knows what is going on. The second amendment allows the board to delegate functions and powers that already exist in the act, excluding any functions which are at the minister's discretion. This will allow the board more flexibility to conduct its business by delegating more menial administrative tasks to junior employees.

The reasoning behind the amendment from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources was that executives would no longer be bothered by trivial things like stationery orders—although when we look at 'cartridgegate' perhaps they should be involved in them. However, I suspect the prevalence of this practice has been greatly overstated, in regard to not being able to do the stationery orders, for the purpose of promoting the bill.

I note that there could be this delegation which may dilute the overall accountability of the minister—and, as we know, ministers need to be accountable for all the legislation—and create a web of transferring responsibilities. Over the years, we have seen more than \$15 million received by Zero Waste SA, yet the expenditure authority has been approximately only \$8 million to \$8.5 million. So we see the fund, as it reaches the 2011-12 financial year budget, to have over \$37 million in it, in 2012-13 over \$44 million, and in 2013-14 close to \$52 million, yet through every consequential year we see that only about \$8.5 million can be spent.

Why is this money not being distributed through, probably, local government networks so that we can see the more efficient disposal of waste? We know that local governments are always burdened by responsibilities that are delegated to them and we certainly know that waste and the disposal of it has changed significantly over time.

I remember living in a country area where the original Coomandook dumpsite was right next to the Dukes Highway. For anyone travelling into Coomandook, less than two kilometres from the northern side of town, you will see a hill. If you know where it is, it is easy to spot. It is a hill on the side of the road where there is no scrub growing or any trees. That was the old dumpsite.

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, as the member for Goyder indicates, they were everywhere. We have the Yumali dump past the end of Parkin Hall on the Sherlock-Yumali road where, not that many years ago, probably about 20 years ago, everyone used to turn up with their rubbish and just pour it all in the same hole and then there would be fires lit to burn up the flammable material.

Those dumps would last for years and years, but we have learnt that we need to improve our practices and we need to split our rubbish up. We need to recycle what we can and I think it is a good practice, but we also need to make sure that we have the right regulatory and legislative processes in place so that our authorities can efficiently take this rubbish off people's hands.

It is also about education. I know people who get frustrated that dumps are only open for a few hours a week. When people are in the middle of a big clean-up job on a property, they are frustrated that they cannot straightaway deliver that rubbish to the close facility. Then people have to make decisions, as I have, because the local dump is not open very often—I am just going from memory now; I have not used it that much. I think it is only open once or twice a month, so we take our rubbish down to the Coonalpyn transfer station on a Sunday when we are having a clean-out.

I suppose the point I am making is we need to have the right framework in place so that people do not start illegal dumping. The point I see is that all this money is being feathered away under the so-called zero waste management, yet we find that people are frustrated by the lack of options in getting rid of that waste. More of this money could be funnelled into councils, so that they could fund more opening times for local government dumps and have an efficient way to receive waste and recycled products.

I know it is a different scene when you go to a dump now. You have the metal in a spot, the timber products go in a spot and, basically, the straight rubbish goes into

bins that are then picked up by the truck on its runs. All I am saying is there is a temptation for people, especially in rural areas, to dig their own holes and put rubbish in them. No-one wants that to happen, so I cannot see why we cannot have more money directed so that we have a proper zero waste policy, instead of people saying, 'Look, we have done such a good job with waste that there is not so much turning up.' Are they sure it is not just being got rid of in another way?

Mr Goldsworthy interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, as the member for Kavel indicates, it gets dumped on the side of the road and that is no good for anyone. That brings up another issue about the cost to people, especially urban dwellers, when they want to get rid of trailer loads of rubbish. If it gets too dear, that is exactly what they do. They dump it on the side of the road and it is absolutely the wrong thing to do. It would be better to have money that comes from the levy that is attributed to householders across the state distributed through the councils so they do not have to charge exorbitant fees so that we can get the waste in the right spot. With those few words, I support the bill.