



Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond

HANSARD

House of Assembly
Wednesday, 19 June 2013, Page 6120

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: LEVY PROPOSALS 2013-14

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:20): I rise to speak to this motion in regard to the levy proposals for the natural resources management boards for this state, but I would just like to concentrate my remarks around the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board levy proposal. I commend the thoughts and the commitment of the member for Stuart on this committee in making sure that levy proposals do not exceed CPI (consumer price index). We have seen here, as recently as 12 months ago, that the Natural Resources Committee rejected some of the proposals for the rate rises, and they succeeded, so I commend the whole committee for that.

I would just like to say that I think there is some good work done through natural resources management, although it has bothered me over time that it does seem to have developed a huge bureaucracy. My wife, Sally, was part of the integrated natural resources management setting this up in the early 2000s. It has grown to a bit of a bureaucratic beast since then, and that is what concerns a lot of people, a lot of farmers on the ground.

Rightly or wrongly, a lot of people do not seem to have any feeling as to what is going on. They see these offices spring up around the state and they are concerned that there is not more of an interaction with farmers and land managers so that they know exactly what is going on on the ground in regard to pest plant management, feral animals, soil management, and the like. I think the one thing that does concern me is that now that all natural resources management boards have come under the control of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources it seems that it has become just part of another government department. I think quite a few community members feel that they are more distanced by what has happened with that governance arrangement.

However, I do think that there are some positives. Some of the senior people in natural resources management are suddenly realising that they do need to better connect with landholders. It is going to take time. It is going to take time because they have been distanced for various reasons. There is a right to know where the many millions of dollars go in these arrangements so that people can see real outcomes, and real outcomes on the ground instead of plans which are endlessly being reviewed. I know there are discussions about sorting that out, with better time frames so that people do not complete one annual review and their whole role in life at the NRM board is to start on the next one. So, a whole lot of bureaucracy, at the end of the day, is starving some of the funding that could be hitting the ground.

I know that in the Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board funding proposals the division 1 levy proposal will go from \$2,073,240 to \$2,108,485, and that is the link to a consumer price index increase of 1.7 per cent. The division 2 proposal rises from \$6,775,999 to \$6,891,190, and that is a 1.7 per cent consumer price index increase as well. I note that overall, through the federal funding, the division 1 levy and the division 2 levy and approximately \$2 million of other funds, the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board will have just over \$15 million to complete their programs.

I think it is absolutely appropriate that the levy not be increased by more than 1.7 per cent. What I wish for in the future is that we have better collaboration between the bureaucracy of natural

resources management and the farmers so that we do not get this antagonism, as the member for Fisher indicated, on the airwaves and people can see real outcomes. We do need to manage our natural resources; we need to get it right. As we have seen with the recent drought and the River Murray, we do need to manage our waterways, but we need to take everyone with us on the ride, otherwise it becomes a very antagonistic situation.

- Ends -