

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 18TH MARCH 2015

STATUTES AMENDMENT (BOARDS AND COMMITTEES - ABOLITION AND REFORM) BILL

Second Reading

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:39): I rise to speak to the Statutes Amendment (Boards and Committees—Abolition and Reform) Bill. As Liberals we recognise that streamlining the process of red tape can make things better, but it can also potentially cause some problems. We are certainly concerned about the Pastoral Board, the Health Performance Council, the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the South Australian tourism board all being abolished under this bill, and I will go into more detail later in my contribution.

I note that the government made their point in July last year that government boards and committees would be abolished to try to streamline decision making. The Premier in the second reading speech was trying to assure us that more South Australians will have the opportunity to be involved with any changes. We will have to see whether that happens or not.

Of the previous 429 boards and committees that are in the scope of this bill, the government have said that they will retain 90 of these outright and, of the remaining boards and committees, 107 will be abolished, 17 will be merged, and 62 are subject to other reform efforts that are underway. There are also another 120 boards and committees that the government are indicating should not be considered government boards and committees and they are reclassifying those, and their options for reform are still being considered for the remaining 33 boards and committees.

I think that shows that there a lot of things that we do not know on this side of the house in regards to a lot of these boards and committees—some being put on hold, some being put on review and there are some, we are told, that will be outright abolished under this reform. I think debate in committee will be for an extended period of time in regard to this bill.

In regard to this legislation, there are 43 pieces of legislation to abolish, merge or simplify 56 boards and committees. As I indicated before, some of the boards that the government are chasing are the South Australian Tourism Commission Board, Community Benefit South Australia Board, the Natural Resource Management Council and the Minister's Youth Council.

A lot of my concerns are in regard to a lot of the agriculture and forestry impacts that come about with this bill, and I think agriculture, sadly, in this place seems to be a poor cousin when it is actually the mainstay, I believe, of the economic future of this state. Whatever happens in this country and in this state, agriculture has always been there in the background doing the job, and at the moment currently supports around 25,000 jobs in this state and is heading towards \$20 billion annually in total economic output. So, I think we need to approach the reclassification or abolition of these boards in a very careful manner.

Just going through an implementation table that the government have supplied, it indicates that for the alpaca, goat and horse industry groups the aim is to abolish by June 2015; for the deer and the apiary industry advisory groups the aim is to abolish; and for the pig, cattle and sheep industry advisory groups the aim there is to delegate power to appoint members to a chief executive. Then we get to the South Australian Wine Industry Council, which is to be abolished; the Agribusiness Council—abolish; Aquaculture Advisory Committee—abolish; the Fisheries Council of South Australia—abolish; the Rock Lobster Fishery Management Advisory Committee—abolish; and the South Australian Forest Industry Advisory Board—abolish.

Just while I am talking about forests, we had the tourism minister speak eloquently about Adelaide Oval, paid for out of taxpayers' money, and yes it was. Much of the funds that went from the sale of the South-East forest went to the Adelaide Oval. Yes, the Adelaide Oval is a magnificent place to go and attend sport or other events, but I think it has come at a great cost to this state. We had an asset that was earning the government close on \$45 million per annum, yet the government decided that was a risk. If I was in business and if I was a farmer with a big enough property (and it would have to be a huge operation) and I was bringing in \$45 million a year, I do not think I would be getting rid of the asset, but anyway, perhaps I have a different mind as it relates to economics. Just in regard to—

The Hon. T.R. Kenyon interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Newland is interjecting out of his seat.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, and you're not taking any notice of him. I commend you, but not—

Mr PEDERICK: I'm just taking any notice. You sounded—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: —very much like him.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I could just remind everybody, the Treasurer is on one warning and the member for Newland is only on a call to order, but I can change that very quickly. It was much better when you were all busy, so, keep busy, and we will listen to the member for Hammond in silence.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for your protection. What I want to speak about now is the South Australian Forestry Corporation Board. The deputy leader asked the Minister for Forests some questions about it last year in a briefing in November. It is interesting to note that the response to the deputy leader describes the action of the South Australian Forestry Corporation Act, and it prescribes a board of management under a charter co-signed by the Minister for Forests and the Minister for Finance.

It oversees the operations of the South Australian Forestry Corporation, and it obviously manages forest reserves proclaimed under the Forestry Act in the Mid North, Mount Lofty Ranges, Bundaleer, Wirrabara, Whyte Yarcowie, Leighton, Mount Crawford, Kuitpo and Second Valley, and forest reserves proclaimed in the South-East, namely, Cave Range, Penola, Mount Burr and Mount Gambier, the extent of which no longer contain any commercial plantations following the sale of harvesting rights to OneFortyOne Plantations Pty Ltd, and the forest lease to OneFortyOne Plantations Pty Ltd in the South-East and in western Victoria.

The response from the Minister for Forests to the deputy leader indicates that, in the Premier's final review of boards and committees, the board is being retained subject to further investigation while an alternative governance model is explored. That concerns me greatly. We were extremely concerned on this side of the house. We were against the sale of the forward rotations of the forests. What I am hearing from the South-East is that, in terms of the forestry that was sold to OneFortyOne Plantations, when the financial implications are better they can export log, that log is exported, and we are left with some of our mills—in fact, most of our mills—in the South-East not getting the quotas, which they are supposed to get, by 10 or 15 per cent. This is one of the effects of the forward sale of those forests. I hope that the government is having a very good look at the South Australian Forestry Corporation Board. In my thinking, that board should be retained.

I notice that the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of South Australia selection committee is to be abolished and replaced with a consultation-with-industry process and a nomination process to be developed within industry. When I first did a quick reading of this I thought the government was going to abolish the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board, but, thankfully, that is not going to happen because we certainly

need to keep up our phylloxera-free designation in South Australia. I do note that the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of South Australia will be a delegated appointment to the chief executive.

I note that the South Australian Citrus Industry Development Board has already been abolished. The Aquaculture Tenure Allocation Board will be retained. I realise that it is probably being kept because it works out the tenure and, I am assuming, the lease costs for people involved in the aquaculture industry. The South Australian River Murray Sustainability Program Steering Committee will be abolished when the project is completed.

The Genetically Modified Crop Advisory Committee will transfer the appointment power to the minister. As an individual and coming off the land, I find that interesting when we all know that the minister has a certain thought process in regard to genetically modified crops, yet I acknowledge that we have a world-leading plant accelerator at the Waite Institute at the University of Adelaide, where there is a lot of genetically modified crop work happening. I wonder about having a minister certainly stuck on one view of GM crops who will end up with the overall control of that issue.

I note that the Veterinary Surgeons Board of South Australia will be retained. The Rural Assistance Appeals Committee will be abolished after the present scheme expires. The Dairy Authority of South Australia will be retained. The South Australian Forestry Corporation Board Audit and Risk Committee is to be reclassified as non-government—it will be interesting to see where that turns up. The Meat Food Safety Advisory Committee will delegate power to appoint members to the chief executive.

A lot of my major concerns are about what is going to happen in regard to how we manage things in this state when a lot of these boards go, because my understanding about what is supposedly going in place—and it was certainly very raw when this bill was first proposed—is that there were no alternatives to what was going to happen. For instance, the Pastoral Board, a board that looks after the interests of most of this state, and certainly in light of stocking rates, animal welfare issues in the Far North on the pastoral lands and a whole range of issues relating to pastoral lessees which is a whole different kettle of fish to most of us on the internal farmlands or the suburban farmlands who farm with title. They have a different title arrangement with this station country and they do not work underneath a local government system in most of this area. It is 'out of area'.

You only have to see the difference between an 'out of area' part of Australia by driving through to Birdsville and heading just north of the South Australian border. You have basically been driving on a track to get to that border and then you hit a nicely graded road up to the South

Australian border, or in the case of just out of Innamincka heading towards Brisbane, there is bitumen right to the border, about 24 kilometres from Innamincka in the Cooper Basin.

Some very real questions need to be asked. I know there have been some ongoing discussions and I would be very keen to hear the member for Stuart give his speech in this place because I know he has been involved in discussions on where this might head as far as maintaining governance over the pastoral lands of the state. I have a real fear about having that amount of country delegated to a minister without having local representation. I have a real fear that things could get out of control very quickly.

It is not just with the Pastoral Board but it is like this with a lot of these industry sectors. I have gone through the bill and I have gone through the expenditure clauses, and I have seen that a lot of the power will be put into the minister's hands. I note that the agriculture minister, the tourism minister, commented that he thought it would be a great thing if he could take control of tourism instead of having a tourism board, but will we end up with basically a dictatorship over these things? It concerns me that so much power will be directed through to the minister of the day, but as I indicated earlier in my contribution, I think a lot of this will be fleshed out at the committee stage.

Certainly with regard to animal welfare—and as a farmer by background I am absolutely concerned with animal welfare—and the government wanting to abolish the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, we want to know what will be in place. Will it be a structure that stands up? Will it be something that looks after the animal welfare of our state and helps our pastoralists and our landowners in their production of animals?

There has been much talk about the tourism board, and we are certainly concerned on this side of the house about it being cut out of the equation, and it will be interesting when we go through the committee process. We have heard some of the commentary by the Minister for Tourism, but I think a whole lot more needs to be unpacked around that to convince me that it is better for the minister to have the final say.

The issue that is probably timely to discuss in light of what is happening with the government's Transforming Health arrangements at the moment is the abolition of the Health Performance Council. There are a lot of concerns at the moment about where people will be in relation to health performance and the services required for people and their health needs right across the state. I know a lot of the Transforming Health proposals are in regard to urban hospitals, with the declassifying of emergency wards and the shutdown of the Daw Park Repatriation Hospital, but they do have an impact on regional people because at any one time probably

30 per cent of the patients in urban hospitals are from the regions who have to come for more specialised care.

Certainly some of the things that are happening that are a bit quieter out in the regions are like those that happened out on the Fleurieu. The member for Finniss and I had a forum the other day about the impacts on the Yankalilla community, the Goolwa community and the Victor Harbor community, since both Yankalilla and Goolwa will not have triage at their medical centres anymore. People will have to be transported further through to Victor Harbor, which could mean an extra 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the traffic, and could mean, I believe, a real difference between life and death for a patient.

Not only that, it is also what will happen with the triage for the patients in our nursing homes in Goolwa and other areas in the state if we do not have that medical service close, with doctors on hand to make the triage decisions. What I am concerned about in this whole debate on health is the delegation of who is going to make a decision on where people land when they have an accident or an illness. It looks to me as though there is going to have to be a list stapled on the back door of an ambulance so that people can go through the list and say, 'Oh, no, you're only this sick, we'll take you to this regional hospital. We may fit you in the surgery. That's not the thing we should be doing, but we don't think we need to transport you through to Victor Harbor, for instance, if there is someone at Goolwa needing a service.'

It is just mind blowing that a lot of the decision-making could be very much life and death, especially in regard to declassifying the emergency section of the Noarlunga Hospital, which we thought was going to be closed. If people are at the scene of an accident or have a serious illness—a stroke, for instance, was brought up today during question time—someone down the line is going to have to make a decision. I think this could have more ramifications for our volunteer ambulance people out in the bush and the regions. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

At 17:59 the house adjourned until Thursday 19 March 2015 at 10:30.