



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 31st MAY 2017

ECONOMIC AND FINANCE COMMITTEE: EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY 2015-16

Adjourned debate on motion of Mr Odenwalder:

That the 87th report of the committee, entitled Emergency Services Levy 2015-16, be noted.

(Continued from 1 July 2015.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:24): I rise to speak on the Economic and Finance Committee 87th report on the emergency services levy 2015-16. In regard to this levy, the total funding target for 2015-16 was \$278.2 million and \$7.5 million to the Community Emergency Services Fund, which was to do with costs associated with the emergency services responses to the 2015 Sampson Flat bushfires.

Certainly, what we see as time goes on with this emergency services levy and how it is raised through the state is that it is applied as soon as there is any reasonably sized emergency. It does not have to be a major fire, though we have had some big ones of recent times. We have had Sampson Flat and we have had Pinery, which was absolutely devastating. To get the agricultural year we had afterwards, which was more by the grace of higher authorities than anyone in here, we had plenty of rains, but they were some terrible scenes.

I was fortunate to tour there, and some of the tour was with the Natural Resources Committee, and I thank the committee for inviting me. In the sandy country, as anyone in agriculture knows, it was blowing and blowing. There was no way you could even cultivate it to try to hold the land, which was what they were doing on some of the heavier country. Maybe every 50 metres or so, they were cultivating strips, trying to cut back on the drift that was happening because things had burnt so hot on the couple of days that the fire was going. What really horrified me was how close the fire came to really settled towns like Gawler, where it actually jumped the Sturt Highway on the perimeter of the town.

The issue for me and for us on the Liberal benches is that this is just used as a land tax grab against South Australians. It keeps going up and there seems to be no end to it. This population is already suffering under unrealistic energy costs, state charges, water prices and electricity charges. The emergency services levy does not just hit home owners: it is levied on sporting clubs, community organisations, churches and independent schools.

Time and again we see the Weatherill Labor government just rip money out of South Australians' pockets. What we have seen over the last three years are massive emergency services levy hikes by the Weatherill Labor government, which is an absolute disgrace. Why I say that is that most of the population is struggling to make ends meet.

If we are successful in March next year, we will reduce by \$90 million a year the cost of the emergency services levy to South Australian taxpayers, saving an average household up to \$150 a year. We will do that by putting the remissions back in place to put that \$90 million annually back into people's pockets because people are sick of having massive increases. Some of these increases have been by hundreds and hundreds of per cent of what their emergency services levy used to be.

Being a member of the CFS—and I know there are many other members in this house who are—it appals me that just because there is an incident you know that you are going to get money ripped out of your hip pocket—because that is the way this Labor Party operates. It is just appalling that that happens. I do not want to take away from the volunteers and the people who come from interstate to support us. It is magnificent work that goes on in fighting these fires and these emergencies, but people are literally getting taxed to death with these emergency services levy rises.

We have the highest level of unemployment in this state. We need to put money back into the pockets of South Australians, and that is exactly what we on this side of the house will do. People have a clear choice at the next election, Madam Independent Deputy Speaker. They will have a clear choice in the seat of Florey.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Technically, member for Hammond, it is a bit out of order to indicate someone's party or lack of party allegiance when you address them.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Get back to the people of Florey—that was a good bit.

Mr PEDERICK: Okay. I certainly believe there will be a lot of interesting outcomes at the next election. People need to make a clear choice as to whether they want good governance and money back in their pockets, especially in regard to the emergency services levy. It is a massive commitment from our side of the house to put \$360 million over four years back into South Australian products while still contributing with appropriate amounts so that our emergency services operate. We will make this state great again.