



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 31st MAY 2017

STATUTES AMENDMENT (HEAVY VEHICLES REGISTRATION FEES) BILL

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 1 March 2017.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:01): I want to acknowledge that I am not the lead speaker from this side of the house, but I want to make a contribution in regard to the Statutes Amendment (Heavy Vehicles Registration Fees) Bill 2017. This bill amends the Highways Act 1926 and the Motor Vehicles Act 1959, with amendments to assist South Australia to meet its agreed obligations as a participating jurisdiction under the February 2014 Heavy Vehicle National Law (South Australia) Act 2013 which contains the national law as a schedule.

This bill provides for the creation of a National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (referred to as the Regulator). The national legislative regime for heavy vehicles deals with trucks over 4.5 tonnes in gross vehicle mass. In regard to what has happened, the simple fact is because the registration chapter of the national law has not yet commenced, heavy vehicle registration is still under state legislation. However, participating jurisdictions registration fees are governed by model law, and that is approved by the national Transport and Infrastructure Council made up of state and territory ministers.

Vehicle registration charges are now calculated on the basis of both road user charge and regulatory charge components. South Australia, along with other participating states, has agreed that the regulatory revenue collected as part of registration be transferred to the regulator fund, and this was previously paid by the South Australian registrar into the Highways Fund, providing the regulator with industry based funding to resource its duties. This is made through amendments to section 31 of the Highways Act.

With amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act, this will clarify that deductions from concessional registration charges for people living in remote areas and primary producers will be taken from the roads component and not the regulatory component of the fees provided to the regulator's fund. This bill is in effect a stopgap measure to pay for the National Heavy Vehicles Regulator until all arrangements are completed. Registration fees we are told will not increase, but instead a portion will be handed on to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator instead of going to the Highways Fund from which the South Australian share would be paid to the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator separately anyway. In consultation, from this side of the house, we understand that the industry, including the South Australian Freight Council, is quite pleased with the regulatory harmonisation through the national regulations. That is supported pretty well generally by the industry overall.

Registration fees are a high cost wherever you operate in South Australia, whether you run a small business or a large business or whether you run a farming business. The fees and charges can run into many tens of thousands of dollars over different items of plant and equipment in your possession. I think it can be something like \$6,500 to register semitrailers, obviously B-doubles are a lot more than that, and now we have road trains operating in parts of South Australia and there are higher registration fees for those vehicles as well.

I have mentioned in this place before about that three-year road train trial between Pinnaroo and Tailem Bend, in terms of shifting grain; that creates those efficiencies, but it also comes with a high regulatory cost in the registration of those vehicles. It is a charge that does get passed on to the end user. Those registration fees come back as a freight charge to whoever accesses road transport in this state, whether you are primary producers or whether you are farther up the chain in regard to general freight being transported around the state.

There are certainly other registration charges that have also come in in more recent years regarding farming plant, tractors and the like, front-end loaders, Manitous, etc., and even though those charges are not high they keep increasing over time and it becomes quite a high cost. The member for MacKillop was talking about the registration fees for his property, between his trucks and equipment. He has a once-off date which is, he thinks, about the end of January, and I asked him afterwards, 'What would that bill be likely to be, because it is all your registration fees in one hit?' He said that it could be as high as \$12,000. That does not surprise me at all, and that is just one family farming unit and the level of fees that affects them.

In the main, I think we need to work together to get more harmonisation with regard to national heavy vehicles. In this country, we have vehicles that travel all the way from Queensland right down to Victoria and freight that goes over to Tasmania. In regard to east-west transport, we have freight that comes from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and heads over to Perth and back, and also from Adelaide through to Darwin and back.

It is just a simple fact that our freight is being moved through all states. I do not think that Western Australia is online with the national heavy vehicle registration, which is disappointing. Obviously they have their reasons, but I think for harmonisation it would be better to have everyone on board, to have a standard right across the country. With those few words, we are certainly supporting the bill and look forward to its speedy passage through the house.