

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 11 May 2006

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (TRANSFER OF WATER LICENCES) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I commend the government on its commitment to remove some of the fees and charges where water is donated to an accredited environmental watering project. Refunding a portion of the NRM-based levy paid by the donor in respect of the donated water is one incentive for people to address this issue. Another is the removal of transfer fees on water allocations on licences donated to the environment, and the removal of establishment fees for environmental donation licences. All these issues are excellent to give people incentive to donate water back to this scheme. The removal of stamp duty on water allocation licences donated to the environment is another excellent idea, but I believe (as does the member for MacKillop) that we need to extend the level of the removal of stamp duty.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am sorry to interrupt the member for Hammond, but I draw to the attention of members that there is a problem with the clock. The honourable member's remarks started at 3.52, and 20 minutes is available to him.

Mr PEDERICK: You will be safe, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr Williams interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, no worries. Thanks, Mitch. I believe that we need to extend the level of the removal of stamp duty. We should be addressing the issue of inter-generational transfer of water and the removal of stamp duty on these transfers. For irrigators on the river or lakes (and I have a significant portion in my electorate of Hammond), the removal of stamp duty would be a significant help for farming families. These people are suffering enough as a result of poor commodity prices, and I cannot see why stamp duty cannot be removed on water licences transferred between generations of farming families.

We are all aware of the tough times that especially citrus growers and vigneron are having in the irrigation areas. There is already an exemption of stamp duty on the transfer of land and plant and equipment, and this relates to the Stamp Duties (Concessions) Amendment Act 1994, concerning family farm transfers.

I will read a portion of that act in relation to family farm transfers, which I think would be appropriate for the transfer of water allocations. The act provides:

The land is used wholly or mainly for the business of primary production. The business of primary production is defined as the business of agriculture, pastorage, horticulture, viticulture, agriculture, poultry farming, dairy farming, forestry or any other business consisting of the cultivation of soils, the gathering in of crops, the rearing of livestock or the propagation and harvesting of fish or other aquatic organisms.

Most of that wording could appropriately be transferred through as far as water allocations are concerned. Obviously, in sections that talk about horticulture, viticulture and pastorage, where irrigation is used I think it is totally appropriate. At some stage, could the minister come back to the house with a costing of such a stamp duty exemption?