

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 30 May 2006

STATUTES AMENDMENT (ROAD TRANSPORT COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT) BILL

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I wish to speak briefly on what I believe will be the inequitable issue of grain carting off farm. Being a farmer, I am fully aware of the vagaries in weights of grain, the hectolitre weights that can vary greatly according to weather, etc. The general weighting of grain goes from about 12 bags a tonne (on the old scales) for your wheat, peas, etc., through to 18 bags a tonne for your oats, so there is a 50 per cent difference in the weight and you have to make a measurement on a volumetric scale when there are no weighbridges within cooee to check on your load.

I take issue with the expectation that a packer, loader or consigner, whatever you want to call the labourer or farmer who is loading the truck, can be absolutely responsible for an inaccurate measurement. Over time you get used to a visual assessment of how much weight is in either a semitrailer or a B-double load of grain, for whichever variety of grain you may be delivering. This is helped greatly by air bag indicator scales on some trucks, but it only works on a dead level surface, and there are not too many times when a truck will be on a dead level surface in a farming situation. Most likely, it will be anything up to 50 to 80 kilometres from the nearest weighbridge, so I believe we need some tolerances in the bill.

From past experience, I believe you could have up to two tonnes of difference on a semitrailer load of grain in the 27 to 29-tonne range and the B-double could have at least a three-tonne difference on a person's visual assessment of a load. I agree with most aspects of the proposed bill, but there need to be some tolerances for any off-site loading of grain or any other primary product for people who do not have easy access to a weighbridge. To back this up, I have seen quite experienced truck drivers—and I am not having a go at the truck driving industry—load grain silo to silo, with access to a weighbridge where they are loading at ABB sites, having to run back and tip out a tonne or half a tonne to be within the legal limit.

I would ask the house to consider that, with loads that are not easy in the first instance early in a harvest, when people are trying to work out what the hectolitre weight of their grain will be in the load, there should be tolerances allowed in the bill for this and some smart thinking in this regard.