

House of Assembly - Wednesday, 5 September 2012, Page 2748

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE: REVIEW OF NATURAL RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT LEVY ARRANGEMENTS

Mr BROCK (Frome) (11:22): As with the previous speakers, I also would like to comment on and support the 49th report of the Natural Resources Committee, entitled Review of Natural Resources Management Levy Arrangements. I also congratulate the member for Ashford on her great leadership of this committee. As the member for Mount Gambier has already indicated, this committee is represented by a wide range of political alliances, and it has one final view in the outcome, which is the better management of our natural resources across the whole of the state.

I, like the member for Stuart, have some concerns and, unless it is greatly justified, I certainly would not be able to approve any increases above the CPI. The natural resources boards do a fantastic job under extreme circumstances, and I tend to agree with the member for Mount Gambier that maybe the levy should be renamed a tax, because it is, in effect, some form of taxation to manage issues across the state.

Just because a board puts in an application and it may be below the CPI or just on the CPI increase, I do not believe it should be an automatic approval by the Natural Resources Committee of the parliament. We are there as a committee to ensure that we get the best opportunities for the people of those regions that each board represents, and we will continue to do that. I think that the natural resources boards need to be very innovative and continually managing to look at the best practices going forward. Everything changes and we need to change with the times.

Also, the fact is that the natural resource boards out there need to be able to allocate more time, and the minister may be able to take this on board. When they put their reports into the Natural Resources Committee of the parliament, we then analyse them and bring the boards in to discuss issues with them. If we have any concerns, we need to get them back to each of those regional boards.

Those boards may need to also come back with some justification, even if the increase is on the CPI or above the CPI, to convince the Natural

Resources Committee of the parliament that this increase is justified. These final increases or levies or taxes that are approved need to then go back and be identified to each of the local council areas, and the councils need to include them on their rate notices. We also need to be able to ensure that, if we are going to hold something up because some justification is required, we do not hold up the rate notices going out from the councils because, as I said earlier, they are the ones collecting these moneys on behalf of the government of the day to ensure that we put that into the natural resources.

Like the member for Stuart and other members, I wholly support all the recommendations in this report. Again, I commend the staff of our committee who do a fantastic job. I would say that this committee would be one of the hardest working committees in the parliament. We have certainly done the best we can. We have personally been out on the ground and looked at issues because if you do not do that you do not have a real understanding of the real issues facing the regions and the outback areas. I certainly commend this report to the parliament.