



Media Release



Wednesday, January 20, 2016

Livestock SA calls for freeze on NRM levy increases

Livestock SA is calling on Natural Resource Management Boards across the state to freeze land and water levies at their current rates, rather than impose the proposed exorbitant increases to recover government spending from landholders.

Last week, Livestock SA responded on behalf of its members to calls for comment from three NRM boards on new business plans outlining the levy increases – the South East, Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, and the SA Murray-Darling Basin.

Livestock SA sought feedback from members in submitting its feedback. It has a call out to pastoral zone members for their feedback before comment is provided on the SA Arid Lands NRM Board business plan.

The proposed NRM levy increases are much higher than the standard rate of inflation – which is the maximum any levy is supposed to increase. In the three regions, increases for the land levy alone range from 6% to 125%, aside from any increase to the water levy component.

Livestock SA president Geoff Power says the call for the levy freeze is because producers are already questioning what benefits they currently receive from the levy, regardless of what further value any increases may bring.

“Many livestock producers are uncertain about the value of the NRM levy at its current rate. We are not sure what we are getting for our investment, even weeds and pest animals are not being controlled,” Mr Power said.

“There needs to be a cost-benefit analysis on current NRM programs and projects and as a result, some will need to be either cancelled or quickly finished.

“NRM boards need to get back to their core business of helping to achieve a sustainable and productive agriculture sector.

“Primary Producers SA has called for an independent review of water planning and management costs, consistent with the National Water Initiative agreement pricing principles. We support this call and agree there needs to be a far better understanding of these costs, whether they are good value for money and the ‘recovery from landholders’ is justified and fair.”

Livestock SA South East board member Jack England says many South East livestock producers are not in a position to be able to pay the increases, particularly given the current dry conditions.



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“It is ironic that at the same time as producers are being asked to pay higher NRM levies that the State Government has developed a drought assistance package for the upper South East to support farmers and farm businesses in the region who are currently suffering the effects of two consecutive years of well below average rainfall,” Mr England said.

“It is completely unacceptable for the State Government to charge South East landholders \$2 million for ‘water planning and management costs’ without providing any detail on the basis of costs incurred.

“There is no way that the South East could cost the State Government \$2 million when all the NRM Board does is monitor 900 bores. We strongly believe the increased levy burden – should it be proved to be needed – should be shared by a broader mix of all ratepayers.

“Some producers are facing a five-fold increase, which is massive. For each dollar we spend, we need to know what we are getting in return.”

ENDS

Media spokespeople:

Geoff Power, Livestock SA President, 0428 581 067.

Regions:

- South East: Jack England, Livestock SA board member, 08 8767 5071 (leave a message and Jack will return your call)
- SA Murray-Darling Basin and Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges: Joe Keynes, Livestock SA board member, 0428 648 235.
- SA Arid Lands – Colin Greenfield, Livestock SA Northern Region chairman, 08 8672 8936 or 0418 728 933.