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14 January 2016

Att SENRM Board
Submission on the Draft Business Plan
PO Box 1046
MOUNT GAMBIER SA 5290

(email DEWNR.SENRMBoard@sa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Brennan

Livestock SA is opposed to the proposed increase in the NRM land and water levies as detailed in the draft business plan.

Many South East livestock producers are not in a position to be able to pay these increases, particularly given the current dry conditions. 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 from the effects of two consecutive years of well below average rainfalls. Rather than an increase, given the seasonal conditions, the NRM Board needs to be asking for a freeze on any increases at least until conditions improve. It is extremely callous to even be considering any increases at this time.

Producers are also questioning what benefits they will get from paying increased levies, or indeed from their current levies. There needs to be a benefit cost analysis on current NRM programs and projects and as a result of this analysis, some programs and projects will need to either be cancelled or quickly finished. The Board needs to get back to its core business and assist a sustainable productive agriculture sector.

Livestock SA, as a member of Primary Producers SA, supports the call for an independent review of the water management costs (see attached media release). Primary Producers SA has also made comments about the Board's revised business plan which Livestock SA endorses. We ask that your Board support this call for an independent review.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Power
President

Call for independent review of water management costs

Primary Producers SA is calling on the State Government to conduct an independent review of water management costs across the whole system following the announcement of proposed large increases to natural resource management levies for farmers in some regions.

The call comes as State Cabinet prepares to travel to the South East for Community Cabinet this weekend, where Premier Jay Weatherill and Ministers will hear first-hand of the deep concerns of South East landholders towards plans for large rises to NRM levies.

Primary Producers SA executive chairman Rob Kerin says the review would include Natural Resource Management Boards and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

“PPSA’s NRM Committee has met with DEWNR officers regarding the levy issues,” he said. “The plans to collect many millions of dollars more through NRM Boards to help fund the operations of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has outraged many landholders.

“After the drainage debate, Emergency Services Levy increases of up to 1000 percent and drought across much of the region there is significant anger about the extra impost.

“There is a real need to examine the costs being incurred, efficiency and transparency of water management. We need to know that we are getting value for money. When we talk cost recovery we need to know what we are getting for our money. These cost increases are further shaking farmer confidence in NRM, and there is a need for far greater transparency.”

Mr Kerin said the report of the independent review must be made public.

“The PPSA NRM Committee has also raised concerns as to how the increases have been handled and the fact that NRM Boards seem to be the ones forced to justify DEWNR expenditure and work out how the money will be raised,” he said.

“In addition to the water management cost recovery, there has also been a significant rise in ‘corporate service’ charges. The NRM Boards have been asked to pay a lot more to DEWNR for staff on-costs and this may also be added to NRM levies for landholders across the state.”

ENDS

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