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Simpson defends community groups

Local MLA Tony Simpson has criticised the State Government for raising the rents on community groups using State Government Forest Lease land.

Mr Simpson expressed his concern in a Grievance Motion in State Parliament last week, where he stated that he was worried that Government moves to charge higher rents to community groups would create yet another obstacle to people wanting to participate in outdoor activities.

“It is a worry when the Government raises rents for community groups by 1,000 per cent,” said Mr Simpson.

Using the Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters Association as an example, Mr Simpson highlighted the good works these organisations perform for the community.

“The lease covers a 213-hectare site, of which only 12 hectares is used by the club.

“All in all, the club puts a substantial effort into protecting the native environment covered by these 213 hectares. They maintain all of the firebreaks and fences for the site.

“The club has also invested a substantial amount of money on infrastructure on the site, which is used by members of the local community.

“There are many other clubs besides this one that are providing services to the community that can be affected by this rise in rent.”

Environment Minister David Templeman responded by stating that he appreciated where Mr Simpson was coming from on the issue.

“My view is that although this fee obviously represents a significant increase from the club’s previous lease arrangements, the new fee reflects the importance of the area that it holds the lease in... notwithstanding my deepest respect for its ongoing maintenance and care for that leased area.”¹

Mr Templeman also admitted that the Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters Association was not the only community group to be affected by the rise in rents.

“Similar clubs and associations would also pay higher lease rental fees under the new 2006 schedule”, he said.

¹ All quotes for David Templeman from the Legislative Assembly Hansard, Thursday 3 April 2008