



Speech by

Mr P. PURCELL

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard 29 February 2000

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (5.53 p.m.): In speaking to the Natural Resources and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I make the observation that we are not making full use of the land alongside the roads and lanes in rural areas. Were we to drive through western Queensland, we would see how much unused land there is between roads and fences in rural areas. The Bill should address the fact that the land and resources out there are going to waste.

Mr Seeney: Give us a break.

Mr PURCELL: Given the noise my colleague opposite is making, I can only assume that he does not put to full use the land alongside the lanes around his property. Something should be done about the timber that grows, dies and falls to the ground on that land. It should be harvested. For example, the lanes could be leased and in return for those timber resources the lessee could be responsible for keeping out the rubbish and maintaining them. That would be a useful exercise that would produce much-needed revenue for the State. It would also preserve the State's revenue, because at the moment it costs money to control noxious weeds in those areas. The land-holders along those roads would probably welcome this initiative, because it would mean that weeds would not spread onto their properties. Some noxious weeds are spread very easily. When graziers take their cattle or sheep from one part of their property to another via a lane or a road, the seeds from weeds along the roadway get into the fleece of sheep or onto the tails or legs of cattle and are spread to other areas of the property. Graziers then face the added cost of removing those weeds from their properties.

Following the spread of the recently introduced viral infections among rabbits, there are probably not many rabbits left. Rabbits have been a problem for many years. However, I note that Inglewood is trying to encourage Australians to farm enough rabbits so that Akubra hats can once again be fully Australian made. At present, rabbit skins are imported into Australia to make those hats. That is probably something that not many honourable members know about. It is a shame that Australian hats are no longer fully Australian made; fur from overseas is used in those hats. About seven rabbit skins are needed to make one felt hat. I have spoken with the Minister for Primary Industries about setting up an experimental rabbit farm and abattoir. Perhaps one day rabbit meat might even become as popular as chicken meat is today. When I was a kid, we had chicken twice a year—Easter and Christmas. We were lucky to get it. We probably only had chicken if we had a few chooks out the back and we bowled them over ourselves. These days, chicken has become a very popular meat, and I think rabbits could be similarly as popular. The concern of some producers that rabbits may escape from the areas where they were being farmed would not be justified if concrete floors and netting were used to enclose them.

Returning to the Bill, there could be a number of benefits to producers from having the lanes and roads around their properties leased out. As I said, they could also graze their flocks or herds along them. Thousands upon thousands of acres in Queensland are lying unused beside the roads. That land could be put to use and it could be a very important revenue raiser for the State. It would also assist in the control of noxious weeds.
