



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS [QUEENSLAND] AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (2.56 p.m.): I rise in support of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Amendment Bill 2001. The National Registration Authority, or the NRA as it is known, plays a vital role within rural and regional Queensland. The passage of this bill through parliament will ensure the safe use of all agvet chemical products in Queensland. Prior to March 1995, the Commonwealth held responsibility for the evaluation and assessment of selected agvet chemical products as well as their clearance for registration. The states and territories were responsible for the registration and control of use of all agvet chemical products. Initially, the Commonwealth's involvement in the clearance process was informal until arrangements were put on a legislative basis in 1989. Then in July 1991 the Commonwealth, states and territories agreed to establish the national registration scheme, or the NRS, for agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

The development of the NRS sought to place under one national umbrella the assessment and registration of all agvet chemical products previously undertaken independently by the Commonwealth and each of the states and territories. Under this partnership, the NRA operates as a statutory authority with responsibility for the evaluation, the registration and the review of agricultural and veterinary chemicals and their control up to the point of retail sale. However, the states and territories retain responsibility for control of use activities, such as licensing of pest control operators and aerial spraying. Under these arrangements, the Commonwealth implements the legislative powers and functions provided to it under the legislation on behalf of all jurisdictions.

As my colleague the member for Mulgrave pointed out, the minor amendments the bill is seeking do not in any way change the intent of the legislation but rather ensure that there can be no challenge to the legislative basis for Commonwealth inspectors to enforce our legislation. The changes also ensure that, in the case of a breach of NRA regulations, the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions is empowered to prosecute for any offences against the legislation even though such offences are offences against the laws of the state.

The work of the NRA in administering and enforcing the national registration scheme is essential to preserving Queensland's environment and infrastructure. This government is committed to catchment management, restoration and development. The announcement earlier this year of \$3 million of investment over three years for the Burdekin rangelands-reef initiative was very welcome in my electorate and is indicative of our commitment to sustainable development and maximised productive capacity of the complex catchment from the rangelands to the Great Barrier Reef.

The purchase of an aquatic weed harvester for the Burdekin catchment will drive social and economic development within that catchment area. Indeed it was, I believe, an initiative of the local regional community forum. I saw a presentation about that weed machine when I was a member of that forum. The aquatic weed harvester physically removes weed from the system without having to resort to herbicide based solutions, which can cause further water quality and infrastructure problems during flooding.

The NRA must be able to administer the NRS, knowing that cases they prosecute can withstand the test of law. Allowing companies and individuals to escape prosecution because of a mere technical gap in the legislation could have a detrimental effect on our environment. This bill seeks to clear up any potential for this to occur. I commend this bill to the House.