



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 13 December 2001

PEST MANAGEMENT BILL

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (2.41 p.m.): I, too, am pleased to speak in favour of the Pest Management Bill 2001. Indeed, I endorse the closing remarks of the member for Mudgeeraba. She made the good point that sometimes those of us who are the clients of pest management services know little about the chemicals involved and know little about the potential dangers that they can pose to themselves or even to unborn children. Therefore, I recognise the importance of setting standards commensurate with our knowledge in 2001 of the risk of such pesticides not only to clients of pest management operators but also to those who are working in those businesses.

I want to refer particularly to the competency standards that will be required as part of the bill that are features of the new licensing system that will be established requiring qualifications for a pest management technician's licence. In order to secure that licence, the attainment of nationally endorsed competency standards will be required. These competency standards for pest management were developed by the property services industry advisory body in collaboration with the pest management industry and, in particular, the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association. The standards form part of the training package for asset maintenance in property services, which was endorsed by the Australian National Training Authority in December 1998. The standards comprise 42 units of competency. Each unit deals with a separate technical or business function relevant to carrying out pest management activities and specifies the tasks involved in performing the activity and the criteria against which the level of competency in that activity can be assessed.

In parallel with the development of the competency standards, a national standard for licensing pest management technicians was developed by state and territory licensing authorities in partnership with training organisations and the pest management industry. So to all of those bodies who have been part of the development of these qualifications, of the detailed contents that lead to the 42 units of competency, we should say thank you. Their hard work on behalf of their industry and for the protection of the general public is really appreciated. It would be understandable if from time to time some people who were part of those many consultations and part of the work of developing the details behind this bill became frustrated. But it seems as though it is not going to be long before their hard work is recognised and enshrined in law. Of course, as members of parliament it is a relatively simple matter for us to support this bill as other people have done the hard and detailed work. Therefore, I really thank those other officers in government agencies, particularly the Department of Health, for their efforts.

This bill means that, from now, new entrants to the industry will ordinarily undertake training, either through a registered training organisation or at the workplace under the supervision of a licensee. The method of assessing a trainee's competence will involve two components. The first component is an on-the-job component involving assessment at a workplace or simulated workplace. That might be an assessment during a practical workshop run by the registered training organisation or an assessment on the job by a qualified industry workplace assessor. The second component is an off-the-job component involving an evaluation of written assignments set by the registered training organisation.

Although these new standards may be accepted by new entrants to the business, simply because they have not been involved in the business before and, therefore, would not be aware that these are new requirements, nonetheless they may not be so well received by existing operators. It has

been the experience of people who have worked in other industries that, when new standards of qualifications are required, despite people's many years of experience, they become somewhat anxious as to whether or not they can translate that experience into passing suitable assessments or evaluations of a written kind to prove their competence. In those circumstances, existing operators have also been considered by the bill. Their experience, as well as their need to have an independent recognition of their qualifications, has been allowed for.

The other method of assessment is a simpler process called a recognition of current competence. Under this process, the registered training organisation reviews evidence provided by the person of their competence, such as documents showing the person's current qualifications and work experience. The recognition of current competence process might be used by existing licensees who are required to upgrade their qualifications. If those licensees are able to demonstrate the required competencies, they may be able to continue to be licensed without undergoing any additional training. Alternatively, existing licensees may need to upgrade their qualifications in specific competencies.

Therefore, some existing licensees may not be comfortable with the bill as they may find that their ability to translate their experience into external evidence of their competence is somewhat lacking. In fact, they may find that they need to upgrade their qualifications. Although they may be experienced, as they have been repeating that same level of experience over and over, they are just a little behind the leading edge of their profession, as it were. I encourage those people to persevere. Learning skills a little later in life is not as hard as it sounds.

Nonetheless, this bill is essential. The Pest Management Bill, by requiring licensees to attain qualifications based on the national competency standards, will result in a greater level of protection to the Queensland public from health risks associated with the use of pesticides and fumigants. It will ensure that all of those in the industry—technicians and those with full licences—are themselves protected from harm within their workplaces.
