



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 13 December 2001

### PEST MANAGEMENT BILL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.27 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Pest Management Bill. I have some questions regarding this legislation, but overall it is not controversial and it has the widespread support of the major operators in the industry.

For too long now, there has been controversy regarding the control of pests, especially termites, in houses and buildings and the ineffective methods used by some unscrupulous operators. The introduction of national competency standards for pest technicians dealing with timber pests will surely alleviate these problems.

Health issues cannot be disregarded. It is imperative that all people involved in the pest control industry are aware of the dangers of exposure to the chemicals involved. Therefore, it is important that people involved in this industry are qualified and licensed.

The changes to the bill will include the development of new training programs based on nationally recognised competency standards, and these programs will benefit both the public and pest management operators. Also, it is worthy of note that the new legislation will consider a person's past convictions on relevant offences when applying for a licence. These changes will help to protect the industry from the dishonest operators who are charged and then simply move on to another company where they then commit the same offences.

These changes can only be beneficial for the public. However, I am concerned that it appears that only the larger pest management businesses have been subject to most of the consultation regarding the legislation. I would certainly urge in the implementation of this legislation that there be more consultation also with the smaller operators. However, from my discussions with those operators, I understand that a number will still have to upgrade their skills. We appreciate that in the implementation of that there needs to be good communication and ongoing consultation so that people have enough notice of and access to courses to bring them on board.

There will be increased costs of licensing for most pest operators along with the changes to the legislation. Therefore, I seek an assurance from the minister that an effective system will be put in place to inform all operators of the changes and to look at the best possible ways to mitigate the increase in costs.

No doubt some pest technicians will have to undergo further training. This training must be affordable and accessible and convenient to all to ensure regulatory efficiency and health safety. The Environmental Health Unit of Queensland Health will be responsible for the monitoring of operators. I hope that there will be sufficient staff to monitor the levels of performance of operators and the use of pesticides.

Indeed, it was reported to me recently that people in north Queensland had trouble getting anyone to check their house, which they believed had been sprayed with under-strength chemicals. Therefore, I ask the minister: what extra funds have been contributed to ensure that correct and sufficient monitoring procedures are followed, and what are the performance indicators in regard to monitoring in this area? We all want to see good legislation and the best standards, but the issue of monitoring and ongoing compliance is something that will be an issue. I am very keen to hear from the

minister about what is proposed under this legislation and certainly whether there is to be any improvement in regard to staffing for increased monitoring.

While the public have a right to be protected, the new legislation gives significant powers of entry and wide consequential investigative and enforcement powers to inspectors. I am concerned that these powers could be abused if there were conflict between pest management companies. The Environmental Health Unit therefore must be vigilant to make sure that the abuse of these powers does not occur.

With regard to clause 10, I note that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee considers that this clause constitutes a Henry VIII clause. I agree with the committee's concerns and seek the minister's explanation in this regard. I wonder if it is really necessary. I note also that the new licences overlap in that people also have to be licensed through the Building Services Authority. There obviously continues to be a very strong health component requiring the department to be involved in the licensing. I certainly flag that there could be issues in relation to duplication, training and education and the processes of licensing. I believe that this is an area which needs greater coordination. However, the safety of the public is paramount, and householders need to be assured that when they pay for pest control services they are getting nationally recognised standards used in the application of those services. Therefore I support the bill.

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