



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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PEST MANAGEMENT BILL

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (12.31 p.m.): I rise to speak today on the Pest Management Bill 2001 with deep-seated fear in my heart. This fear is based on the behaviour last night of the member for Robina. The member showed his low level of intellectual functioning during the adjournment debate by criticising members of the government and accusing us of padding out our speeches. I am very, very concerned that he was not able to understand the quite difficult concept of an analogy.

During my speech in relation to the dog management legislation I used an analogy whereby all members of the House have been bombarded with emails in relation to that matter and discussed the concept of breed specific legislation. I tried to draw an analogy between breed specific legislation and the behaviour of dogs. The failure of the member for Robina to understand the concept of an analogy strikes terror in my heart that he will not have the ability to understand some of the concepts behind many of the government members' speeches here today. So I rise with fear in my heart that what I am saying today will be used against us because the member is unable to understand some of the basic concepts of reasoned debate, that is, analogy and drawing comparisons.

We saw another example of that earlier this week when the member for Indooroopilly was criticised for having the hide to talk about agricultural issues in Ireland when we were debating an agricultural bill in this House. All I can say is that the stupidity shown by members of the opposition strikes terror into my heart that, for the next couple of years, they will not understand the basic processes of reasoned intellectual debate. However, I must admit that I do digress.

The Pest Management Bill 2001 has a number of aims and objectives. The primary aim, of course, is to protect the public from the health risks associated with pest control activities. Many of the chemicals used in pest control activities are highly toxic and can cause serious harm to people who are exposed to them. Exposure to pesticides can occur through skin contact, inhalation of fumes, vapours or dust, and even by ingestion. The degree of risk posed by exposure to these chemicals varies according to factors such as the type of chemical, its strength, the method, frequency and duration of the exposure, and the age, size and state of health of the person exposed. For example, if a child ingested Chlorpyrifos, which is a broad spectrum organophosphate pesticide, as a result of the pesticide being accidentally sprayed onto one of the child's toys, life-threatening symptoms such as convulsions and respiratory failure may result and prove fatal unless prompt medical attention is provided. Similar symptoms can result in the case of repeated exposure to low levels of the same chemical. However, outdoor use in appropriate conditions presents a much lower risk.

In another example, a timber pest technician was engaged to undertake pre-treatment when a family planned an extension to their home. The technician sprayed a pesticide on the ground in preparation for the building extension. It was windy, and the pesticide spread over the fence, affecting the neighbours—in particular, the neighbour's child, who is severely disabled and was near the fence in his wheelchair. The pest technician had failed to make a proper assessment of the wind conditions and placed the child at risk. It is important that pest management technicians have the knowledge and skill to take account of the potential harm that the use of pesticides can cause. It is acknowledged that most of the pest control operators out there take their profession quite seriously and do have the skills necessary to make these assessments. However, as in all sectors of society there are rogue elements. There are rogue operators out there. We have heard numerous stories about them in the past.

Ms Male: Absolute shonks.

Mr ENGLISH: Some are absolute shonks. But it is important to acknowledge that the majority of pest control technicians are highly skilled professionals. We are trying to provide a framework that the good operators will be able to adhere to so that the shonks—to which the member for Glass House referred—will either lift their game to meet the required standards or be driven out of the industry.

To protect the public and the people who perform pest management activities from the health risks associated with exposure to these chemicals, it is essential that people performing the activities have appropriate skills to do so and follow established safety procedures and precautions. These include selecting an appropriate chemical having regard to the pests to be controlled and the environment in which the activity is being carried out; using appropriate protective clothing and equipment; ensuring that food and drink in the premises are protected from possible contamination; properly maintaining equipment and vehicles used in connection with pest management activities; and storing, transporting and disposing of chemicals, including containers used to hold these chemicals, in a safe manner.

The licensing framework established under the Pest Management Bill aims to ensure that pest management activities to which the bill applies are carried out by licensed persons who are competent to do so and in accordance with practices and precautions necessary for the safe performance of such activities. The requirements regarding safety practices and precautions of the kind mentioned are not contained in the bill but will be prescribed by regulation following the release of a regulatory impact statement for stakeholder and public comment. However, the bill itself does impose a number of important obligations on licensed pest management technicians, namely, that licensees must use a pesticide or fumigant in accordance with its registered label, and they must notify the chief executive of any exposure, spillage or other release of a pesticide or fumigant that adversely affects, or is likely to adversely affect, a person's health. I compliment the Minister for Health for her commitment to public health and safety and commend the bill to the House.
