



Speech by

**RONAN LEE**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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**AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS [QUEENSLAND] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr LEE** (Indooroopilly—ALP) (3.20 p.m.): The member for Kawana has risen significantly in my estimation now that I am aware that he was chairman of the Mosquito and Midge Board on the Sunshine Coast. I am very impressed. I was also impressed by the passion with which he spoke about his relatives in Ireland—a proud agricultural country. I grew up in farming country in the Republic of Ireland in a small town of about 600 people called Ballyjamesduff in County Cavan. It might have been a small town or village, but the hinterland was filled with farms and farmers. On mart day, thousands of people would visit the town.

The main industry in the area was dairy farming, mainly with Friesian cows, but there were quite a significant number of piggeries, some sheep, and some cropping. It is fair to say that farming and the processing of agricultural products formed the basis of industry in Ballyjamesduff. When one has had that sort of a background, one realises how difficult farmers lives can be. They live and work in a very uncertain industry, an industry which is affected by the weather like no other. The industry is also affected by not only the national economy but also the international economy; it is affected by interest rates; it is affected by exchange rates; and, in terms of the production of food, it is affected by people's tastes.

For that reason that I am pleased to rise in the House today and support the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Amendment Bill 2001, a bill that will work towards removing a little bit of the uncertainty in primary industries. I concur with the statements made by the member for Kawana about bringing the animals indoors in Ireland in the winter. Farmers had to; it was so cold. They could not leave cows and sheep outside; they took them inside. You then had to find a use for or a way of disposing of quite significant quantities of effluent. People felt that putting it onto the fields was a very simple way of recycling the effluent and making a practical use of it.

However, we had a problem in County Cavan. With the large amounts of rain that fell, quite large amounts of effluent would run off. We held the record in Ireland for the most number of lakes in a county. We had 365—one for every day of the year. During the 1960s we had perhaps the best fishing lakes in Europe. However, because of effluent run-off throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, we ended up with significant amounts of water pollution and, sadly, a lot of the fishing lakes really do not fall into the category of fishing lakes anymore.

I was involved with a wonderful group back home called the Lough Shellin Anti-pollution Group. In about 1964-1965, Lough Shellin was listed among the top 10 fishing lakes in Europe, mainly for trout fishing. By the mid 1980s it did not make the top 1,000 list. The Lough Shellin Anti-pollution Group had as its basis an education program. They sought to educate local children, mainly children of farmers, and they sought to educate them as to ways of better looking after local lakes. Their idea was that if the kids who would eventually inherit the farms were taught about pollution, the problems that might occur would be solved.

My mother's family were the farming side of my family in Ireland. It is fitting to speak of this today because I was recently sent a number of photographs from her family. They all went to a small school in Drumshambo called Authagrana National School. The school is now closed, unfortunately, but both my mother Mary Lee nee Baron and her sister Valerie, brothers Noel, Aiden, Brendan and Gerard all went to Authagrana National School. I mention this because while Ireland is an agricultural country, it

is also a country that in recent decades has acknowledged that education has to form the basis of any decent economy.

**Mr English** interjected.

**Mr LEE:** I take the interjection from the member for Redlands. I was actually going to talk about the Smart State. I actually think that Ireland was perhaps the first Smart State because what Ireland did was acknowledge that the guts of its economy was based on agriculture which, by its nature, is uncertain and they felt that the best way of stopping the brain drain out of the country was to educate people. I think that Ireland lost so many good people through lack of jobs. That has been reversed now.

**Mr JOHNSON:** I rise to a point of order. I draw the member for Indooroopilly to the attention of the House. I ask: how is this relevant to the legislation we are debating here? Mr Deputy Speaker, we are going to sit late tonight, and I ask you to make a ruling on this in relation to the legislation before the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Poole): There is no point of order.

**Mr LEE:** In my own way I am trying to explain to the House, by comparing some of the agricultural issues in Australia to those with which I grew up in Ireland. I would have thought it was fairly straight forward to understand that in a bill that is called the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Amendment Bill 2001 I was discussing a water pollution issue; namely, the pollution of a lake in Ireland called Lough Shellin, polluted by effluent from agriculture. I am aghast that the member cannot see the relevance of that. Perhaps it would be better if I talked—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Indooroopilly will speak through the Chair and bring some relevance into his debate.

**Mr LEE:** I beg your pardon, Mr Deputy Speaker. I guess I was put off my game there for a minute. Perhaps it would be better for some members of the House if I talked about the fact that my County Cavan not only did not have a freight railway but did not have any railways at all.

There are numerous examples of how agricultural issues have arisen in Ireland from which we can learn, just as there are numerous examples in Australia that they could learn from us. But I think it is relevant and I think it is very important that as a government and as a state we acknowledge that we actually can learn from other people and from other countries. As a member of this House, I would be very disappointed that I could not raise what I believed were some very pertinent agricultural issues purely because they were issues in Ireland first.

The objectives of the bill, which I am so pleased to support, are to amend the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Act 1994. It will validate things that were done or omitted to be done by certain Commonwealth authorities or officers under the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, or the NRS, that are potentially invalid following the almost infamous Hughes decision of the High Court. The bill will also validate things done or omitted to be done by certain Commonwealth authorities or officers that are potentially invalid due to certain gaps in the NRS legislative scheme that have arisen independently of the Hughes decision. The decision in Hughes affects the NRS by casting doubts on the validity of the exercise of powers in relation to the NRS by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Commonwealth inspectors and analysts. I am very pleased also because there are absolutely no administrative costs to the government in the bill's implementation.

It is also worth noting that, as with another bill discussed already today, while this bill does retrospectively impose some legislation upon the state, it is legislation that will have no adverse effect on anyone and will in fact be of great benefit to the people of Queensland by way of clarifying some important things. I am pleased also that the bill has been the subject of comprehensive consultation with the community and that it is supported by those who participated in that consultation process. I am very pleased to support the bill. I commend the minister for putting it together. I would also like to commend the department, which played a significant role in that.

**Mr English:** 'Consultation' is the minister's middle name.

**Mr LEE:** 'Consultation' is very much the minister's middle name, whether in relation to his dealings with the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Queensland) Amendment Bill, the fire ants or even those little critters the crazy ants. I am very pleased and proud to support such a fine bill.

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