



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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PEST MANAGEMENT BILL

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (12.46 p.m.): I rise to speak to the Pest Management Bill 2001. I generally agree with the policy objectives of this bill to protect Queenslanders from the effects of poisons which are used in the control of the numerous pests and vermin we have to fight against in our everyday lives. It has long been documented that contact with many of these products can cause a wide range of health problems. It is the case that we have to weigh up the worth of the poisons that have to be used against the health issues and/or the destruction that can be caused by the many pests in our society today. Our pest controllers do a wonderful job. Where would we be without them?

Over the years we have seen many changes to the types of poisons that have been used and subsequently taken off the market. These have been used in households as well as across many industries. I can remember when most large cattle stations used DDT in their dips. This had been the practice for decades and certainly saved the lives of numerous cattle—cattle which had previously died from the effects ticks had on them. DDT has now been taken off the market and other forms of poisons are now used. I was involved in the building industry for about 20 years and remember when dieldrin was the common poison to put under house slabs. Subsequently this was found to be unsuitable and these days other types of poisons and preventives are used.

White ants have become a huge problem again. They are everywhere and it seems there is no stopping them. Owners of timber homes, especially the older style ones, must be forever vigilant. Even those with brick veneer homes have to be watchful, as we all know of instances where the timber frames and trusses have been eaten out, leaving only the brick shell intact and massive repair costs. The poisons being used these days do not seem to be keeping the white ant invasion at bay. They are even in the trees. Near my home there are white ants in the gum trees. There are dirt trails from the ground right up the trunk and along the underside of every branch. I am told that the white ants will fly about 100 metres, so any white ants in trees within a hundred metres of a building need to be eradicated. Meanwhile, they are killing the gum trees.

I believe that an apprenticeship type system has been put in place in the pest control industry whereby newcomers to the industry have to do a two-year practical course with a licensed pest management technician. They also must pass a number of academic courses in conjunction with or at the end of the apprenticeship before becoming qualified.

Pest controllers I have spoken to do not have a problem with this bill, with the exception of the huge penalties for breaches referred to in clauses 11, 50 and 51, which constitute offences punishable in each case by a maximum penalty of \$75,000. Clause 11 provides that a person must not carry out a pest management activity unless that person is a licensed technician or a properly supervised trainee. Clause 50 provides that a person who is not a licensed technician cannot advertise in any way, shape or form. Clause 51 provides that a licensed technician, or anyone carrying out a pest control business, cannot permit or require another person to carry out pest control activity unless that person is a licensed pest management technician or a properly supervised trainee. With the huge fines able to be imposed on an employer for work done by someone else in his employment, and with trainees having to be continually supervised, it is difficult to see many owners of small or even larger businesses taking the risk of employing people.

It is of concern that a person or corporation can be found guilty of offences committed by their representative. This bill states that executive officers of a corporation must ensure that the corporation

complies with the provisions of the bill, otherwise each executive officer also risks committing an offence. This bill states that an executive officer cannot hide behind the corporation banner. With human nature being what it is, who will take on such huge responsibilities? We see again, as we have seen in many amendments passed in recent times, the wide-ranging powers conferred upon inspectors to enter property and to demand documentation—powers of entry which can extend beyond situations where the occupier consents or where the entry is authorised by a warrant. Documentation must be made available to inspectors upon request. It is important that all documentation be kept up to date by pest controllers otherwise fines can be imposed at the very least, adding to our red-tape society.

This bill takes into account requirements of the national competition policy. I have noticed that many bills and amendments in recent times make reference to the national competition policy. One could almost say that it has become the new constitution of Australia. This amendment bill seeks to replace the existing licensing system under the Health Act 1937 and the Health Regulation 1996 with a new single licensing system which will cover three classes of pest management activities such as pest control activities, including activities for timber pests, excluding activities for timber pests and fumigation activities. In conclusion, while pest management is a specialised area and workers in that industry need to know what they are doing, it seems that national competition policy is again dictating and strangling yet another industry with excessive regulation to the point of threatening a person with heavy penalties for daring to involve themselves in private enterprise.
