

**SELECT COMMITTEE INTO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURE  
PROTECTION BOARD**

*Motion*

Resumed from 7 May on the following motion moved by Mr P.D. Omodei -

That a select committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed to inquire into and report on -

- (a) the structure and future direction of the Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board in Western Australia;
- (b) funding of the Department of Agriculture by government and the private sector;
- (c) whether the Department of Agriculture's responsibilities should be expanded or diminished;
- (d) whether there are conflicts between the Department of Agriculture, the Agriculture Protection Board and other government departments; and
- (e) what changes, if any, need to be made to ensure that the Department of Agriculture is agriculture focused,

and that the committee report to the Assembly by 30 August 2003.

**MR M.F. BOARD** (Murdoch) [4.07 pm]: I will make some brief comments on the need for the select committee set out in the motion of the member for Warren-Blackwood. It is an important motion. I will concentrate on the motion, and not just on the need to consider the importance of select committees and the role they play in a bipartisan approach to bring about important reform in this Parliament. In fact, only today I spoke to the member for Nedlands about her role in a standing committee of the Parliament. I do not believe this Government is utilising the standing committees of the Parliament to their fullest extent. The highly paid and highly trained research capacity of those standing committees could benefit not only the Parliament but also the various issues that are put before ministers. I commend the Minister for Health for recently supporting the inquiry into attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder by the Education and Health Standing Committee. That is a proper use of a standing committee to deal with a difficult issue in a bipartisan way, and it will bring a recommendation to this Parliament that will be dealt with subsequently by the minister.

The history of the Parliament shows that a great number of select committees took a bipartisan approach to inquiries. Occasionally committees cannot agree on a particular course of action. However, in the main, select committees have brought about constructive changes. Originally, according to the then Opposition, the select committee into metropolitan water supplies and ground water reserves was established to help allow development above ground water reserves. As a result of that committee's work and its investigations, the Government decided to do the opposite; it preserved large numbers of ground water reserves. Today, we can see the benefits of that decision. As a result of the shortage of water, we are very much dependent upon ground water. The committee to which I just referred discovered that residential development - even protected residential development - could affect the ground water and hence could be detrimental to the long-term future of Perth's water supplies. That was an example of the proper use of select committees.

It is important for the Parliament to consider the use of select committees and standing committees. It is important and worth considering also whether a standing committee should deal with this motion. The Opposition supports the member for Warren-Blackwood's motion. The member has approached this matter in a bipartisan way. An investigation of and research into the Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board would well serve the Parliament and the people of Western Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before the member for Warren-Blackwood begins, I must make sure that he understands that by speaking he will close the debate.

**MR P.D. OMODEI** (Warren-Blackwood) [4.11 pm]: I am very aware of that, Madame Deputy Speaker. Last week when we discussed this matter, the member for Roleystone seemed to indicate that he would make some comments on this proposal and I sought to find out whether he would make further comments. As he is not in the House, in closing the debate, I will not keep the House for long.

The manager of opposition business presented a good case for a parliamentary select committee to examine the future of the Department of Agriculture and the Agriculture Protection Board. Last week's budget reduced the amount allocated to agriculture by a further \$6.5 million, which comes on the heels of an \$8 million cut last year. There is every reason to examine the future of the Department of Agriculture. I listened to the member for Stirling's response to the budget. He referred to some research on wheat varieties that the Department of

Agriculture used to carry out but that is now done in other States. There is no doubt that that is another case for arguing that the Department of Agriculture's budget ought to be bolstered and, if necessary, expanded.

My motion states -

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- (b) funding of the Department of Agriculture by government and the private sector;
- (c) whether the Department of Agriculture's responsibilities should be expanded or diminished;
- (d) whether there are conflicts between the Department of Agriculture, the Agriculture Protection Board and other government departments; and
- (e) what changes, if any, need to be made to ensure that the Department of Agriculture is agriculture focused,

and that the committee report to the Assembly by 30 August 2003.

The motion asks the Government to consider the future of the Department of Agriculture in a bipartisan way and to call on people to make submissions about what they think the future of the department should be. I have already referred to those matters. We are prepared to accede to the request of the Government that a government member chair this committee. I am disappointed in the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, who is not here at the moment, but who I think understands the issue very well, because the Government is not willing to support this important motion for the future of agriculture in Western Australia.

I thank Liberal Party members for their support of this motion and I thank members of the National Party, who obviously represent a large part of rural Western Australia, for also supporting this proposal. I ask members opposite, particularly those members who represent agricultural and horticultural areas of Western Australia, to consider this matter very carefully and to find it within themselves to support this very important proposal.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (21)

Mr R.A. Ainsworth	Mrs C.L. Edwardes	Mr R.F. Johnson	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.P.D. Edwards	Mr P.D. Omodei	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr L. Graham	Mr P.G. Pandal	Mr J.L. Bradshaw ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr M.F. Board	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr R.N. Sweetman	
Dr E. Constable	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr M.W. Trenorden	
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr M.G. House	Mr T.K. Waldron	

Noes (27)

Mr P.W. Andrews	Mr J.N. Hyde	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr E.S. Ripper
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr A.D. McRae	Mrs M.H. Roberts
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mr N.R. Marlborough	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr P.B. Watson
Dr J.M. Edwards	Ms A.J. MacTiernan	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Mr M.P. Whitely
Dr G.I. Gallop	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms M.M. Quirk ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr S.R. Hill	Mr M. McGowan	Ms J.A. Radisich	

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Pairs

Mr A.D. Marshall	Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr B.K. Masters	Mr C.M. Brown

Question thus negatived.