

PLANT DISEASES AMENDMENT BILL 2001

Second Reading

Resumed from 28 June.

HON B.K. DONALDSON (Agricultural) [8.26 pm]: The Plant Diseases Amendment Bill is a very small Bill; however, due to events that have taken place around the world, it is a very important Bill. The Bill seeks to amend one clause in the Plant Diseases Act 1914. The Bill is mainly about the Western Australian Quarantine Inspection Services. Presently, this service operates out of the mail exchange at the Perth Airport, and at Welshpool. Australia Post is the major carrier of parcels and other items into Western Australia. It has been found that under the Commonwealth's Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989, the Western Australian Quarantine Inspection Services has not been given specific power to take control of parcels in a manner similar to that of customs.

We must cast our minds back. In Australia, we have believed for many years that because we are an island nation and because of our isolation from the rest of the world, we were somewhat immune from diseases and plants that could be introduced into this country. We are all aware that modern forms of transport have been introduced and that, consequently, the world has become a much smaller place. We encourage people from overseas to visit. Many people from overseas have settled in Australia, and they receive parcels of all sorts through the post and from people travelling to Australia to meet up with family. These people, probably unintentionally, carry into this great nation of ours certain products that can have a devastating effect on our primary industry. Interestingly, because of the outbreak in Europe of foot-and-mouth disease, and the mad cow disease, we suddenly find ourselves faced with the fact that our isolation from the rest of the world no longer means that we are immune from certain plants and diseases brought from overseas.

Thank heavens for those little beagle dogs, and their handlers. In many ways, I think they are fascinating little dogs. At the domestic airport terminals, I have watched at the carousel as the little beagle dog sits down beside a person with a backpack on; its handler asks the person to remove his or her backpack, and a banana or an apple is found, the likes of which could have serious consequences for our horticulture producers, our fruit growers. It is probably just carelessness in many ways, but it could certainly have a dramatic effect. The same can be said about the fire blight that existed in New Zealand apples. It is so easy with modern day air travel, or with people inadvertently sending plant cuttings, to introduce diseases that could have a long-lasting and very dramatic effect on the livelihood of many of our primary producers.

We pride ourselves in having a fairly clean, green and disease-free environment in Australia at the moment. I am sure that none of us could imagine what would happen if foot and mouth disease got into our animal industries. It would devastate that industry in Australia. Customs has the power to inspect parcels for drugs, which happens on many occasions. Many a person has attempted to bring in drugs by post, and the drugs have been found and replaced with some sort of powder. The parcel is then bugged, and sent off to the recipient. Customs officers wait down the road and hear the parcel being opened. They hear the comments of the people concerned, and they are on the scene within minutes. This Bill is not about drugs, but it is part of what needs to be done to protect Australia, not only from diseases, but from any substances which are not part of our society.

The federal Government recently announced that it would spend an additional \$600 million on Customs. Fifty-four new Customs officers have been appointed here in Western Australia. Two more dog handling teams have been deployed at the airport. Surveillance of containers is much greater now. Most luggage is now subject to X-ray inspection, so the old days of stacking a few bottles in your case might result in a rather rude shock. A couple of extra bottles of whisky will come up on the X-ray just like everything else in the suitcase.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That is purely hypothetical, of course.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Yes - purely hypothetical. Some people may do it, but I know that no member of this House would do it. Some people have resorted to that type of activity - showing two bottles in the trolley, and two in the case.

The additional funding is welcome, in the light of the seriousness of the situation. The beagle dogs have always interested me. A couple of years ago, at the Central Midland Show at Moora, a girl who handles one of these beagles did some demonstrations of what these dogs are capable of. Certain substances were placed in paper bags. The moment the handler placed the little coat on the dog, it meant business. Its attitude and personality changed. With the leash on the dog started its job. A couple of times, the handler took the dog behind the screen and took its coat off, and then it became just a friendly little puppy dog again. Children in the audience shifted things around in the paper bags. The handler brought the dog back and put on its coat. The dog sniffed at the packages and found exactly where everything had been moved to.

I wonder at the mentality of some people who, even with the sign up at the airports asking passengers to dump all their fruit, still do not dispose of the fruit. I do not think they realise the effect that their actions could have in the form of codling moth, fruit fly, or fire blight, which could destroy the apple industry here in Western Australia.

Hon Peter Foss: What is the disease that infects honey?

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Yes, there is something in honey as well. My son was stopped from bringing honey from New Zealand. It was taken from him before he left. There is one type of processed honey which can be brought in, but others cannot. Maybe someone from the south west might be able to enlighten us.

Hon Kim Chance: It is called European foul brood disease, and it affects bees.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: I know Hon Simon O'Brien is a former customs officer, and trainer. I encouraged him, a couple of years ago, in one of his opportunities to speak in this House, to talk about the sniffer dogs - not only the beagles, but also the other sniffer dogs - that run over the luggage. I think they are Alsatians.

Hon Peter Foss: Hon Bruce Donaldson has a thing about airports, has he not?

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Living in the Agricultural Region, I have to fly to Esperance or Geraldton. Every now and then I take small charter flights. I see a fair bit of the airports.

Hon Peter Foss: Hon Bruce Donaldson is in constant fear of imported diseases.

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Absolutely. I just tremble, because I know the devastation it can wreak. Maybe someone should suggest that I head up a small committee to look at airports all around the world!

Hon Kim Chance: Standing order 747B!

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Spot on! I know the Minister for Agriculture and the Leader of the House, Hon Kim Chance, opened the AAA Egg Company Pty Ltd recently on the Gingin Brook Road. We were very impressed, and not only at the infrastructure that has been placed there. Over \$14 million has been spent. Full credit goes to a group of egg producers who came together and decided to move into new technology, enabling them to produce eggs at a competitive price. It is the old story - the supermarket gets the best deal and the producer does not get a great deal out of it. This new egg farm is state of the art, using pens imported from Germany. We watched the conveyor belts that bring the eggs, and other conveyor belts that bring the manure, which is dried and quietly removed when the chooks are asleep. It is a very high security establishment - bio-security, they call it, and it is easy to understand why. As the management pointed out, if the Newcastle disease, which infects poultry, got into one of the sheds, it would be disastrous. There are 300 000 laying hens in each shed, producing 84 million eggs a year, which is a third of the production of Western Australia. They also have the capability of packing eggs at the rate of 36 000 an hour. They remove any that are cracked, and the double-yolkers. The eggs are not graded - that is all done at Golden Egg Farms - but they are so consistent in the type of egg being produced that I do not think the task of grading would be very hard. It takes an hour to empty the conveyor belts in the furthest shed, and to pack the eggs in the packing room. The quarantine procedures were strict. We had to dip our feet into baths before going into the compound.

Hon Peter Foss: Your feet, or your shoes?

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: Shoes. They asked anybody who had been on a poultry farm in the past 24-36 hours not to wear any shoes worn at that place. They made us put on very strong paper-based overalls, then put covers over our shoes, and a hat.

Hon Peter Foss: You must have looked pretty!

Hon B.K. DONALDSON: We looked absolutely glamorous, all of us! Each shed has a combination lock. The silos are based on scales, so the exact amount of feed used and distributed through a shed is known. Security is important because some careless act could wipe out \$14 million worth of infrastructure and capital outlay. I can understand why they have the strictest security. That must also take place at our air and sea ports, so that we make sure people do not bring stuff in containers or on their person that could have a detrimental effect on the successful horticultural and primary industries in Western Australia.

The Opposition will support this Bill. If we had still been in government, we would have made sure it was done straight away. The minister, in the second reading speech, said that the Western Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service is currently prohibited from opening and examining an article while it is in the course of post, unless it is out of the control, whether temporarily or otherwise, of Australia Post. I presume that this was not because Australia Post was being bloody-minded. It must operate under its particular Act, which is the Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989. It is a necessary clause. I am not a lawyer but, legally, if this provision corrects this anomaly, it is an important clause. To amend one clause appears innocuous, but it will allow the quarantine and inspection service to do this. It is able to do that in every other case, whether at the control points

into Western Australia in the north or at Eucla. It is often interesting to hear reports of some of the goods confiscated at the border controls. A lot of it is fruit. The Ord irrigation area is not far from some entry points, and people could inadvertently bring into the area a plant, cutting or fruit that could have a big effect on its horticultural industry. The immunity of isolation that Australia has enjoyed as an island nation has gone. We cannot afford to relax; we must remain vigilant. It could mean that further amendments are needed to make sure that our quarantine and inspection service can stand alongside Customs at mail exchanges.

People send items through the post with no thought about what it might lead to; some are trying to do the right thing by their family in WA. Tourists who bring back prohibited goods need a slap across the wrist. They sometimes think it is smart to hide things in carry bags or suitcases.

I hope that the additional funding for Customs provided by the federal Government means there will be greater scrutiny of every piece of luggage that comes through Australian airports. Containers are being looked at far more vigorously now than ever before. The quarantine service is making sure that enough customs officers are employed to carry that out. Part of the \$600 million of additional funding by the federal Government was provided to increase the number of surveillance flights. It is now a 24-hour operation in the north west. Those flights are looking for boats approaching Australian waters, which may not only be carrying illegal immigrants, but also be infested with borers, which would harm industries in this State. When illegal immigrants arrive at Ashmore Reef or Christmas Island, the boats in which they travelled should be taken back to their country of origin once they are cleared. Currently, the boats are being sunk because of the threat of borers in the timber and the potential plant diseases from foodstuffs people try to bring into Western Australia.

The United Kingdom is not the only country that has suffered an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. More countries than members would be aware of have spasmodic outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease. The Opposition supports this Bill. It may appear to be only an inconsequential piece of legislation, but it has more clout and gives far greater security to our horticultural and primary industries than it appears to do.

HON M.J. CRIDDLE (Agricultural) [8.46 pm]: The National Party supports this Bill. I am pleased that the powers of inspection and detention of consignment goods, or goods of any kind that potentially carry plant disease, will be conferred upon the inspectors. I am pleased that the officers will have the opportunity to take control of those possibilities. The Western Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service will have the opportunity to open mail as it comes into this State. The Australian Postal Corporations Act 1989 was the reason for that change. We are pleased to see that happen. I listened recently to the federal minister, Warren Truss, outlining what was going to be done in Western Australia and Australia to protect our \$24 billion agricultural industry. It is certainly a comprehensive package. This \$600 million package is the second package. There was an earlier \$70 million package.

It is all about keeping Australia free from disease. I worry about diseases getting into Australia, especially from boats approaching our shores in the north. There is the opportunity for any cargo, including containers, to land with some disease. This package provides for the 100 per cent inspection of ships and the outsides of containers as they land in Australia. The new quarantine inspection targets will include inspection of all cargo and mail that arrives and the screening of air passengers. In most cases, this will include inspection or X-ray of luggage, which is absolutely essential. The minister related the story about a recent international flight on which an extraordinary amount of foreign matter was found. It is a reminder to anybody who travels into Australia that they should make sure they do not have any unwanted matter in their possession. Some years ago, upon re-entering Australia I had to hand over my boots, because I had been on a farm.

Hon Peter Foss: Did you get them back?

Hon M.J. CRIDDLE: No. I was actually happy to give them away, because I did not want to take anything onto my own farm. Taking a disease onto a farming property is the last thing a person would want to do, not that there was any real likelihood of that happening. All these measures were put in place because of foot-and-mouth and mad cow disease in the United Kingdom. The cost to the United Kingdom was astronomical.

That federal package provides five additional detector dog teams, which takes the total to eight. There has also been a five-fold increase in the number of X-ray machines at Perth International Airport, and the number of quarantine inspection staff has risen by almost 90 per cent, from 107 to 202. There has certainly been a very heavy emphasis on inspection as people come into this country. We have a very good reputation on the world markets with regard to the clean, green image that we have in our markets and with the quality assurance that is developing in our systems. We need to make sure that we keep out any unwanted matter that may be an impediment to the good reputation that we have on the world market. This Bill certainly assists in that way, and the National Party and many people in the agriculture industry welcome it.

HON CHRISTINE SHARP (South West) [8.52 pm]: I will speak briefly on behalf of the Greens (WA) to say that we also are very pleased to support the Bill before us this evening and to see that the State is actively

working to strengthen its quarantine inspection service. The Greens are only too aware - and other members have touched on this - that as we move to an increasingly globalised trading system it is more and more difficult to maintain the natural immunity that Western Australia has enjoyed for decades because of our isolation provided by the Nullarbor and the oceans that surround us. We have a natural area freedom from many native pests and diseases, and one of the reasons we have continued to enjoy that area freedom is that we have had a very strong quarantine culture in this State. I am pleased to see that the Bill before us shows us that that culture is alive and well and that we are keen to bring our provisions up-to-date and to still pursue a vigorous quarantine policy.

The protection of our industries and our native flora from pests and diseases that are prevalent overseas is, as other members have said, a cornerstone of clean, green production. I note, for example, from the work that I have done with regard to the New Zealand apple issue, that apple production in Western Australia uses only 18 per cent of the pesticides that are used in New Zealand in order to produce the same product. That is quite simply because in Western Australia we do not have codling moth, fire blight and apple scab - the three major diseases and pests that apples suffer from in New Zealand. Our eastern States counterparts also have codling moth and apple scab. The fact that we can spend less than one-fifth on pesticides in order to produce a major staple crop such as apples is indicative of both the health value and the economic value of maintaining a very strong area freedom and doing all that is necessary to maintain our quarantine culture within the context of globalised free trade. I am very pleased on behalf of the Greens to support the Bill.

HON PETER FOSS (East Metropolitan) [8.54 pm]: I am very pleased to hear that the Greens will be supporting this Bill. I did wait to hear Hon Chrissy Sharp and I was somewhat surprised to hear her support because I remember last year when the Greens rejected similar draconian powers that we proposed the police should have to prevent child prostitution. It is very interesting to see that although they will not support that sort of draconian power for stamping out child prostitution, they are prepared to support it for stamping out vegetable and animal pests.

Hon Kim Chance: It is hardly draconian.

Hon PETER FOSS: Has the Leader of the House read the Bill?

Hon Kim Chance: Yes, I have.

Hon PETER FOSS: Well, maybe it is not draconian, but it was suggested by the Greens that it was a draconian power.

Hon Kim Chance: This Bill is hardly draconian.

Hon PETER FOSS: I would agree with the Leader of the House, but they were exactly the same powers that were refused to the police as being an outrageous affront to civil liberties - the right to go in and search. If the Leader of the House compares the Prostitution Act and this power, he will find that there is a remarkable similarity between the two. I totally agree with the Leader of the House. In fact, there is a little bit of inconsistency on the part of the Labor Party, and I think the Leader of the House should read what was said during the prostitution debate. However, I stray; that was purely a passing remark. The Leader of House should not allow me to be diverted from getting on with my speech in support of this Bill. I purely felt that I should put on the record the slight inconsistency in attitude on behalf of the Greens and also, to a certain degree, the Labor Party with regard to the conferring of the somewhat necessary powers to stop this type of thing from happening.

I was somewhat surprised at the gentle way in which Hon Bruce Donaldson dealt with the people who bring things into this country. He assumed that it was purely by oversight or lack of knowledge that people posted things in and out of the country that were likely to cause some problems. I would like to tell members a very touching and heart-warming story about Lucky. Lucky is a blue-tongue lizard.

Hon G.T. Giffard: Is that the one with one eye and one leg?

Hon PETER FOSS: That one is a dog. This one is called Lucky for a very similar reason. Lucky is touted around by the Department of Conservation and Land Management because Lucky, a Western Australian blue-tongue lizard, was posted from Western Australia to Germany. He was posted to Germany in a normal postal article with his legs taped up so he could not scuffle around in the parcel. When the parcel got to Germany, for some reason the recipient of the parcel decided not to accept it, so Lucky came back to Western Australia and was sent to the return address on the parcel. Unfortunately for Lucky, the return address on the parcel was a fake address and the parcel was hawked up and down the street by the postal service and nobody wished to receive the parcel back again. Lucky was sent off to Germany once more. Again he was unfortunate enough not to have any recipient in Germany, so the German postal service returned him to Australia where, once again, Australian Post hawked him up and down the street looking for the return address on the envelope. Luckily for Lucky, some lady in the street recognised the parcel on its second return and opened it to see what was inside. Her

intent was to find some hint from the contents as to why this parcel had not been delivered. Lucky was found inside and it was determined that he had been going to and from Germany and Australia without any food or water for 18 weeks and was still alive, which shows the remarkable endurance power of blue-tongue lizards. The fact of the matter is that I believe that articles sent illegally through the post are not merely a matter of the inadvertence - I am sure some people would be doing these things inadvertently - but the postal service is sufficiently efficient and fast enough these days for people to contemplate using the service as a means of illegally transferring things from one country to another. Presumably Lucky did not pick up any nasty diseases during his sojourn overseas, although we do not know what diseases young lizards could pick up while visiting Germany. It was remarkably easy for that Australian animal to go to and from Germany on a number of occasions. The exploits of Lucky, the blue-tongue lizard, are a very good warning about why it is appropriate at times for the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service to be able to examine mail in the circumstances designated in this Bill.

The other issue that greatly concerns me is the effect of foreign seeds on our environment. One man's meat is another man's poison. A species that may be suited to another country may cause enormous problems in Australia. South Africans complain about some Australian plants destroying its environment. A classic example is the black wattle.

Hon M.J. Criddle: The double-gee is a good example.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not ready to discuss plants that have been brought in here yet. Western Australian plants thrive in South Africa because the climate is very similar but their natural predators do not exist. An introduced species often does much better in another country than in its own country. Throughout Western Australia nearly all the pests have the word "Cape" in front of them. Most of them were introduced from South Africa. They thrive over here because the climate is similar. However, the natural predators of those plants do not exist here. The Cape tulip, which is one of the most annoying and expensive pests throughout the Avon Valley, is almost an endangered species in South Africa. It is being eaten out over there. A Western Australian scientist who visited South Africa to investigate Cape tulip in its natural habitat had considerable difficulty finding specimens of it because by natural competition it is becoming rare. I do not think it is quite endangered but it is very difficult to find in any quantity. It grows here in far greater quantity than we would like. It spreads by corms. Once a Cape tulip has been pulled out of the ground, it is very difficult to stop its spread because it leaves 50 or 60 corms in the earth. Spraying is the only practical method of eliminating it.

The other foreign plant is watsonia, which many people think is native to Western Australia. I suggest that the Leader of the House point out to the Minister for Tourism, now that we have one, a tourist brochure that I saw in the karri valley the other day showed a lovely picture on the front of the wonderful things to look at in the south west. What do members think was well in the foreground of beautiful flowers? A picture of some watsonia together with rainbow lorikeets, which have reached plague proportions in Western Australia.

Hon Barry House: You can add arum lilies to that.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. People may think the watsonia looks nice and many people think that rainbow lorikeets are lovely. I think they are the noisiest and most revolting birds I have ever encountered.

Hon Dee Margetts: They speak very highly of you!

Hon PETER FOSS: Hon Dee Margetts likes to wear things that look like rainbow lorikeets in her left ear. I do not treat them quite as well as she does.

Hon Dee Margetts: I have leaves as earrings on my ear today.

Hon PETER FOSS: It was a butterfly on the brochure, not a rainbow lorikeet. Nevertheless, the number of rainbow lorikeets has become totally out of control. I understand some people believe the rainbow lorikeet spreads beak and feather disease easily because it does not build its own nest; it pinches other birds' nests, which is a very good way to spread diseases.

Many examples of devastation occur due to an introduction of something which may be under control in its own country but which becomes a nuisance here. The disease many of us worry about greatly is the insidious *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which no doubt Hon Dr Chrissy Sharp is probably consistently concerned about. I have heard various accounts about how it arrived in Western Australia. It has had a devastating effect on the jarrah forest and many other species of Western Australian trees and shrubs. For instance, the banksia and most of the proteaceous plants have a serious problem with phytophthora. Plants such as hakea can be badly affected by it also. One of the biggest threats to old-growth forests is not only the harvesting of them, but also the effect on them of a species such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. Mycelium is probably one of the most difficult things to detect and eradicate. We must take seriously the measures needed to stop these plants and diseases coming into Western Australia.

Many of the younger members of this House, who all appear to have gone to bed because they are so young, probably do not remember that some time ago, every 100 miles or so within Western Australia people travelling around the country had to stop and put all their fruit in a bin. A point was located not far south of Bunbury at which people had to leave any fruit they were carrying.

Hon W.N. Stretch: There was one just the other side of Kojonup.

Hon PETER FOSS: That was to prevent the spread of Mediterranean fruit fly. It was ultimately abandoned because it became a futile exercise. The Western Australian public accepted that regulation with goodwill. It was good for business because people had to eat their fruit very quickly in the car before reaching a disposal bin and buy more fruit if they wanted to take it further south.

Hon W.N. Stretch: We ate more fruit; it was very good for us.

Hon PETER FOSS: Eating it quickly may not have been too good for us, but eating more fruit on the trip was very good for us. We replenished our fruit as we went south.

Western Australia has a long history of readily accepting these limitations and believing the reason for them. We have been very lucky.

Some birds that have not settled successfully here are starlings and sparrows. I am sure the Leader of the House, who regularly visits the eastern States to attend ministerial councils, is aware of the difference between waking up there in the morning and waking up here because the noise of sparrows and starlings is more noticeable here. I am sure he wakes up in the morning when the sparrows are reputedly -

Hon Kim Chance: Breaking wind.

Hon PETER FOSS: - breaking wind, so he is conscious of the noise they make. We have been successful in using the Nullarbor as a barrier to unwanted bird life and the men and women who daily track, hunt and successfully kill the birds that try to cross the Nullarbor should be greatly commended for the fantastic job they do. However, we have not been successful in keeping every bird out. Indian doves seem to be everywhere in the world. I do not know how the kookaburra came to Western Australia. When I was Minister for the Environment, I suggested it be taken off the protected list. My suggestion caused a general howl and scream. However, I believe it should be taken off the protected list because it is a predator of Western Australian birds. No matter how classic some fauna may seem as Australian icons, they should not be protected if they did not originate here and are predators. The difficulty with taking a bird such as the kookaburra off the protected list is that, although a bird specialist can tell the difference between a kookaburra and a Western Australian kingfisher, someone seeking to eradicate the kookaburra with a firearm may not be able to tell the difference. Therefore, some Western Australian kingfishers might be slaughtered if kookaburras were taken off the list. That illustrates the threat of diseases, plants, animals and fungi to not only Western Australian agriculture but also the Western Australian environment. All those things have a great capacity to radically alter the beneficial environment in which we live. It is excellent that the loophole in the scheme for the detection and prevention of the introduction of species into Western Australia will be fixed. I heartily support that and commend the Government for bringing forward this legislation. I ask everybody to tell their neighbours the story of Lucky, because I believe we should all be as vigilant as that lady and check envelopes to see whether they contain lizards or similar articles. I support the Bill.

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) [9.10 pm]: I thank members opposite for their enthusiastic and bipartisan support for the legislation. Hon Bruce Donaldson clearly outlined the extreme risk to Australia of the illegal importation of organic matter. He recognised the improved level of surveillance the Commonwealth has put in place in response to foot-and-mouth disease and transmissible spongiform encephalopathy. We should recognise that and give credit where it is due. The Commonwealth has made a massive additional investment in quarantine. Hon Murray Criddle pointed out that originally \$70 million and then another \$600 million have been expended. I had an idea it was around that figure, and we received a briefing on it at a recent meeting of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand. It is a significant additional input, and I think it is appropriate that it has been raised in this place. It should be noted that this is not a temporary increase in response to FMD and TSE, but a permanent position. Every port, airport and container terminal in Australia will now have 24-hour surveillance. That high-level surveillance will be in place for the duration of the public policy. That is important to recognise. In a sense, Australia's disease freedom is a result of its being a remote island. It is also true that our high level of quarantine surveillance - even before these improvements - has done its job. However, part of the reason we have remained disease free is a massive amount of good fortune. I do not think we can rely on that good fortune for much longer. For that reason, I support the Commonwealth's actions, and I am glad they have been recognised here.

Hon Bruce Donaldson; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Dr Chrissy Sharp; Hon Peter Foss; Hon Kim Chance

Hon Bruce Donaldson raised the issue of beagles. I know dog stories are always popular in this House, but I do not want to start another one. Those dogs make a huge contribution to the protection of Australia. He also recognised the high level of biosecurity at modern intensive animal production facilities and the degree to which operators at places like AAA Egg Company Pty Ltd employ high-security quarantine measures. That is an example of the need to protect animals from the intrusion of disease. In a sense Australia is somewhat like that facility: it does not have certain diseases. It is remarkably free of diseases generally, and we want it to stay that way. That is why we go to such extreme measures.

The Bill corrects an anomaly whereby the Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989 prevents the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service from opening and inspecting mail while it is in Australia Post's hands. The Bill entitles Australian Quarantine Inspection Service inspectors in Western Australia to remove part or all of the consignment from the person in charge of it at the time, including an Australia Post officer, thereby enabling inspection.

Hon Murray Criddle, in support, observed the function of the Act and, as I have said, referred to the Commonwealth's latest package. He noted the enormous quantity of material that comes in on a single aircraft. That is a measure of the scale of the task that quarantine and customs inspectors face. He also mentioned the cost to the United Kingdom of foot-and-mouth disease. To put it in perspective, the last set of costs I saw showed that the cost of the Government's actions alone is already more than £5 billion. If the private sector's cost were included, the figure would probably be three times as great - £15 billion.

Hon Peter Foss: You would then multiply it by three again to convert it to dollars.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes. It has had a horrible effect on the economy. I am told that even after multiplying the figure by three to include the private sector costs, the figure still takes into account only the agricultural losses. The tourism industry has been one of the biggest losers, because tourists will not go into affected areas, which are horrible and dangerous. Dioxin levels are extremely high as a result of the scale of the burning of animals. The vets from Australia, including Western Australia, who went to work with the British Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have come back shattered. They are almost in need of counselling in the way war veterans are. It would have been a horrifying experience for anyone, although they learnt a great deal.

Hon Christine Sharp also supported the Bill. She referred to the risk that arises and is enhanced by the globalised trading situation, and to our area freedom status. She made a good point when she indicated that pesticide use on Western Australian apples is less than a fifth of that in New Zealand. That hammers home the point that we are in an advantageous situation not only as a result of not having the disease and therefore having access to particular markets but also because not having the disease greatly reduces the cost of production.

Hon Peter Foss drew some parallels between this and other legislation he described as draconian. I do not believe these are draconian powers.

Hon Peter Foss: I was not one who described them as draconian; it was the people who opposed the previous amendments.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I put on the record that I do not think they are draconian. If one read the only amendment Bill, one would think it introduces the right to inspect premises; in fact, that right is already in the Act in section 23.

Hon Peter Foss: The police already have power for other purposes.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Certainly. The importation into legislation of the right to inspect premises alongside conveyances results in a more easily managed structure. Hon Peter Foss pointed to the widespread impact of imported organisms and, in particular, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which has caused huge losses in the Western Australia forest industry.

I thank members for their support of the legislation. I am confident that the passage of this legislation will mean a safer Australia and a greater capacity to safeguard animal, plant and human health.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time, proceeded through remaining stages without debate, and transmitted to the Assembly.