

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second Reading

Resumed from 9 November.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [3.24 pm]: I rise to speak to the Biological Control Amendment Bill 2016, but I advise the house that I am not the lead speaker. It is very interesting that whenever we have discussions about impacts on our agriculture, our environment or the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the regions from pests and invasive species, both plant and animal, we seldom hear from those opposite, especially those who represent rural electorates. I always find that disappointing, because it is my observation that many regional areas are choking with the impacts of invasive species of one form or another. It is amazing that members of the National Party do not address legislation such as this, but I stand to be corrected on this occasion and I look forward, I hope, to hearing their contributions.

This legislation will change a definition in the Biological Control Act. It is a fairly significant definitional change. The Biological Control Act goes back to 1986. I think there is an inclination amongst people today to imagine that biological control is new technology, a sophisticated technique or some new means by which we can control various invasive species. But as the date of the act that we are seeking to amend indicates, we have had in place for many years the capacity to do biological control of one form or another, and we have some very successful examples. I think of the use of dung beetles as a means of controlling what would otherwise be an absolutely horrendous fly problem in many of our agricultural and pastoral areas. They are amazing organisms that seek to consume cattle dung and bury it in the ground, enriching the soil. They are doing a formidable job. It has to be said that dung beetles are not native to Australia; they were introduced. They were introduced in a careful fashion and, to the best of my knowledge, they have not dramatically changed the natural environment, bearing in mind that most dung beetles operate in the agricultural setting, which is not its natural environment but a modified version of it. That function of dung beetles is very important. I know that at some times of the year, we wait for the dung beetles to kick in, and it is especially around this time in November. I have no doubt that members get complaints from constituents about those big green flies that bite—they can even bite through denim jeans! There is a hope that eventually we will have another version. I think we have tested dung beetles from Spain and elsewhere to see whether they can have an impact on the green flies, which are sometimes misnamed as march flies.

Ms R. Saffioti: They're not march flies?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The big green ones. I do not think march fly is an appropriate name, because they are here in November!

Ms R. Saffioti: And they sting.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: They hurt, and they upset livestock, dogs and other animals that are bitten by them. They are nasty things; that is for sure. They are out at this time of year in big numbers. Then there are the smaller flies that are just a bit of a nuisance. It seems that we do not have the biological control agent of the dung beetle in sufficient or sufficiently active number. Later in the season, come Christmas time, things begin to dry out and we see the benefits of the dung beetles kicking in. The advantage of the general drying that goes on with changing rainfall patterns we are experiencing and the tendency towards rainfall trailing through to mid-springtime could impact on the effectiveness of dung beetles. We always have to look for new methods.

To think of another example of the use of a biological control agent, the use of myxomatosis to control the rabbit population is probably one of the earlier introductions of a biological control agent. Myxomatosis is a highly contagious disease that renders a rabbit blind, and one rabbit going down a warren will lead to the infection of a whole colony of rabbits. That raises an interesting issue, because the legislation deletes the current definition of "prescribed organism" and inserts a new definition that reads —

- (a) means organisms that are —
 - (i) live organisms; or
 - (ii) viruses or sub-viral agents;but
- (b) does not include live vaccines or resistant cultivars;

I am concerned. This issue will be tested with the minister during the debate, but is it always the case that some of these biological control agents are necessarily live organisms? In the case of landholders wanting to spread myxomatosis, they will seed warrens with dead rabbits, yet we could argue that the actual organism that gives rise to myxomatosis that is alive on the body of the rabbit is perhaps a live organism. I look forward to the minister's explanation of that.

To control rabbits, we have also used rabbit calicivirus. This is a very interesting example. My understanding is that we botched the way we introduced rabbit calicivirus to Australia. It was going to potentially eliminate rabbits altogether and if we got the timing of the release right, in combination with myxomatosis and other control methods, we could have done it, but instead an unauthorised person started to release the infected rabbits with rabbit calicivirus and that led to the spread around the country, just at a stage when it was possible for some rabbits to survive. Sure enough, there was a mutation and we got rabbits that are RCV resistant. That is one of the problems with biological control agents; their effectiveness does not last forever. After a while, resistant animals will arrive and we will have just lost that very powerful tool. That has been the case with myxomatosis. From time to time, the population of rabbits that are resistant to myxomatosis builds up and up and then somehow the population is overtaken by a susceptibility to the virus, so we again get the benefits of the control. It is a complex business and it is one that has to be done very carefully. It is an issue that we have got wrong on numerous occasions in the history of Australia. I look to members who represent regional areas and know that they would have many stories of how the introduction of various pests, plants and animals has caused a huge loss in the productivity of their agricultural land. It has caused a huge loss of natural environmental values as well.

Only in recent years, one of the most topical pests that has come into Western Australia is the cane toad, *Bufo marinus*. Unfortunately, that animal was released in Australia in 1936 around the cane industry. We always have to be wary when we hear various production industry sectors telling us about how they have the solutions and the welfare of the industry and nation at heart. The cane industry brought into Australia a cane toad population from Hawaii, although the actual animal comes from South America. When they brought the cane toad from Hawaii, they were already out of control there. A lecture was given at an international conference in 1932 that was all about improving sugar cane production to increase the yields. Somebody went to this conference and thought, “We’ve got this problem of pests eating our cane. Wouldn’t it be great if we brought cane toads over here so that they could eat the pests—the various bugs?” The problem is that when they got them here, they found that the cane toads could not reach up to eat the grubs that were eating away at the cane stems, so the cane toad never delivered on what it was intended for. There was a gentleman by the name of Reginald Mungomery who said in 1936 —

‘This introduction into Queensland was made only after a careful analysis of the pros and cons, —

That is the sort of language we hear so often today. We hear people talking about all kinds of proposals that will be damaging to the environment, but they will say, “No, we have carefully reviewed the pros and cons.” He goes on —

and, according to the behaviour of the toad up to the present, there appears to be no reason for the assumption that we have made an error in our judgment.’

That was in 1936 and he had them in an octagonal confine. He was able to quickly take a small number of toads; his first batch of 102 toads was collected on a single night in June 1935 near Honolulu. When he got them to Australia he found that within no time at all he was up to 41 800 toads and they were then liberated around Cairns, Gordonvale, Innisfail and Tully. Now, descendants of those toads are here in Western Australia. That just shows how badly we can get these things wrong and what sort of mistakes we can make. We have made errors in many, many other ways too with a number of plant species that we kept as ornamentals and then allowed to get out of control. They were released into the natural environment to become weeds and pasture weeds that we thought would be a wonderful fodder crop for cattle, including buffel grass, and before we knew it, a weed was out of control that causes huge fire problems and a whole sequence of problematic events were caused by it. As I said, there are some good examples. I have been involved in the use of a biological control agent for dock—a weed species. It is a big nuisance; it can take over pasture areas. I recall helping on the family property and putting in something like a toothpick with a little mite attached to it that was in some state of torpor—I think would be the correct term—which was able to be colonised down into the dock plant.

Mr J.M. Francis: It was really small; you couldn’t see it?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I could barely see it. I think it metamorphosed into a clearwing moth. I might be thinking of two biological control methods; it was reasonably successful. The use of these things is good. But that gets me onto a point I really want to raise—biological control. Who do we have in Western Australia today to guide landholders on the implementation of these biological control methods? When I see the state budget for the Department of Agriculture and Food, I am appalled that we have lost so many good, well-qualified staff from the Department of Agriculture and Food who would have been in the position to guide people. If we do not do these things right, we can get our timing completely wrong and waste our time. If we do not put that mite on the dock plant at the crucial time, we are wasting our time. If we do not do it in conjunction with the other methods, we are wasting our time and spending money. I think we got these mites on the little toothpicks that were then put into the dock plants at the right time. We were able to obtain those from the Department of Agriculture and Food, and I suspect there was a degree of subsidisation that went on because there would have been recognition that having these mites released was a good way to improve the quality of pasture around the state. But that is

only useful if we are backing it up with a good technical advisory service. I have a terrible feeling that that is not happening. I know that the new Minister for Agriculture and Food is very engaged on these topics, but in the time that remains to him, I fear he will have no chance of turning around the current situation.

I need to mention while we are talking about various biological control methods and the problems we are often trying to treat, that it goes back to some of our earlier ideas about zoos. Of course, this is a topical point because the Barnett Liberal–National government has announced its commitment—albeit totally uncostered—to a zoo in Chittering Valley. In the early part of the last century, Perth Zoo was home to an acclimatisation society. Acclimatisation was all about bringing exotic animals to Australia so that we could make Australia look more like other parts of the world. We made many mistakes, including bringing in animals that were able to escape and cause all kinds of problems. There are numerous examples of escapees from Perth Zoo, but the one that members are perhaps most familiar with, because it will probably greet them as they go out to the car park this evening, is the rainbow lorikeet. We hear them in the trees. They escaped from Perth Zoo.

Mr J.M. Francis: Really? How long ago?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I think it was in about the 1930s—the 1930s were bad years for this sort of stuff. Rainbow lorikeets should not be in Western Australia.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr J.M. Francis: What about kookaburras?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Indeed, kookaburras; I will come to kookaburras.

Ms M.M. Quirk: It’s no laughing matter!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: No. I saw the kookaburra that lives around here actually being swooped upon by wagtails as I was coming back from lunch.

Mr D.A. Templeman: They were probably Liberal wagtails, I would have thought!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I did feel quite sorry for the kookaburra. I think the kookaburra has been kicked out of his home because he did not really seem to know where to go.

Getting back to rainbow lorikeets, they are a terrible pest, as brightly coloured as they are —

Mr J.M. Francis interjected.

Ms M.M. Quirk: No, twenty-eights are black and green.

Mr J.M. Francis: Are twenty-eights native?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: There is a huge difference.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Rosellas are the ones that are on the tomato sauce bottles.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: There is a big difference between twenty-eights and rainbow lorikeets, minister.

We need a serious eradication program for rainbow lorikeets because they take the nesting spots of the twenty-eights and other native birds. That is why it is a major problem. It is not the noise or anything like that that is the problem; it is simply that they are outcompeting the native species for good nesting hollows in our urban environment. They could eventually pose a serious threat to our horticultural orchard industries as well.

Mr J.M. Francis: You’re right.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: That is another example.

People often say, “Imagine if we were to get some biological control method—if we were to find a disease that would meet the definitions presented in this bill—and we could release it to wipe out the rainbow lorikeets.” I think we always have to be wary of those silver bullet solutions—certainly be cautious whenever they are presented and ensure we do not release something that will have far wider impacts. It is certainly the case when it comes to bird species that there are all kinds of avian diseases that can go from one bird species to another, and in some cases even cross species to mammals. We all know of the problem a few years ago with avian flu illnesses and what have you. This is a very serious matter that has to be treated very cautiously. I note that the legislation before us refers to a national approach. That makes sense. We would hope that we have the best minds able to work on this at a national level, but I think there are times when it is very important that we look at things in a Western Australian context as well. Bear in mind that there are a lot of pests on the east coast that we do not have here. We only have to think of things like Indian myna birds and starlings and what have you. Those are problem species for east coast; we do not need to be involved in any of the biological control methods that I am sure they would love to come up with for the control of those species. Likewise with cane toads. People have been talking about them for a very long time saying that there will eventually be some biological control method. However, it always seems to be 10 years away. It is a bit like affordable nuclear fusion power: that is

always 20 years away. It seems that biological control agents are always about 10 years away, but they never eventuate for cane toads at any rate. That is an issue.

Minister, I am really concerned about how some elements of this legislation relate to the Biosecurity Council. I would think that is our pre-eminent body when it comes to all matters biosecurity and biological control. I had a look through the act we are amending—the Biological Control Act 1986—and could not see a mention of the Biosecurity Council. I am concerned that we are perhaps missing the opportunity to bring the Biological Control Act 1986 up to date with other pieces of legislation, such as the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act. I hope we are making all the necessary amendments and are not missing out on other amendments that would have been useful.

I support the general emphasis and interest on this, but I think it is important to hear from members whose electorates are, as I say, in many cases choked by various pests. We only have to go into the member for Central Wheatbelt's area and see the amount of Paterson's curse there. I could go into the member for Murray–Wellington's electorate and see the amount of arum lily around there. Indeed, I get lots of complaints from his constituents telling me we should be doing something. I also get complaints from the member for Vasse's electorate telling me about all those problems and pest species and saying, "Mr Tallentire, why aren't you doing something about this?" I say, "Look, as an opposition member I'd love to be able to do more for you, but really all I can do at this stage is raise it in Parliament, raise it with the government and say that I think there is huge community support for action on these various pests." I know the government certainly has an ear to those who complain about wild dogs, and it likes to talk about responding with barrier fences, but there are many other introduced pests.

We have made this mistake many times. I talked earlier about how rabbits were introduced because we thought that would make the place look like England and give us something to hunt and eat. Then we realised we had a problem on our hands, so we introduced foxes; then we had a problem with foxes that still goes on today and causes incredible damage to the natural ecology. There is lots of imbalance because of that introduction. We have to be sure that we learn from the mistakes of the past so that we do not replicate another introduction.

I have not touched on the pests in the marine environment. The potential for biological control there is somewhat limited, but it is always a reminder to us that we have to be ever-vigilant about the sorts of creatures that might be contained in ballast water and what might be on the hulls of ships, and make sure that any vessels that enter Western Australian waters are properly checked and cleaned. If that cannot be done, entry should be refused so that we do not have any serious biosecurity breaches.

The amending legislation before us appears, on the surface, to be sound. I remind the house that it is about changing the definition of "prescribed organisms" so that we can talk about those as being live organisms, viruses, or sub-viral agents. I seek from the minister clarification about organisms that might in fact be just as effective as biological control agents, but might actually be dead. Recognising that the minister is not the Minister for Agriculture and Food but is representing him in this house, I hope the minister has access to the technical advisory service that the state is so desperately in need of out in the field. A major concern of mine is that people who want advice on biological control are able to gain access to it. I am sure there would be many people in the member for Swan Hills' electorate who would want to improve the quality of pasture on their properties and would love to have good technical advice so they can find out how best to control something like dock grass or blue lupins, which can get out of control in horse paddocks. They would want advice on how to do that. However, I fear that at the moment the Department of Agriculture and Food would not have the staff to provide that level of technical expertise. People can waste a lot of money and actually almost do more harm than good if they start to try to control these pests at the wrong time of year. If they miss that window of opportunity to perhaps use a combination of spraying, hand-weeding and careful use of grazing, they really will come back to a far more severe problem next year.

This is a serious issue. I must again stress the connection between weeds that are not properly controlled and fire risk. That is one of the major threats we face in the Perth outer metro area. Our peri-urban environment is really very modified. We have to acknowledge that if people undertake very frequent burning and get the timing wrong, they are opening up the soil perfectly to the colonisation of a whole lot of weed species, such as wild oats, which are incredibly flammable—far more flammable than a layer of leaf litter that might build up with moisture and other bits and pieces. If there is a highly flammable layer of weeds, there is a massive fire risk.

I commend the bill to the house and I look forward to the minister's clarification on some of the points I have raised.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [3.53 pm]: I certainly concur with the previous speaker on much, if not all, of what he has brought forward on the Biological Control Amendment Bill 2016; he is certainly a far more learned person than I am in that area, given his previous studies. I am from the law of the bush. The farmers

speak to me about biological controls, and over the last year that is certainly one of the major concerns I have heard, more than any other. Their concerns revolve around the lack of research and the removal of some of the top scientists in Western Australia who are carrying out studies to try to eliminate some of the problems we have in this state. These problems have been spoken about—pigs, goats, camels, carp and fruit fly, just to name a few. We need some controls in this state, and when we take away money for research, we are damaging our industries. At times we need to use chemicals or other methods to rid agricultural areas of animals, viruses or anything else that affects farmer's ability to make a living and a reasonable profit from what they are doing.

I can understand why the Biological Control Amendment Bill 2016 is before us. Some of the issues we have talked about previously include the cane toad. There have also been some successes. We have talked about calicivirus, which is designed to thin out the rabbit population. There were some side effects that people did not quite understand when calicivirus was tearing its way across the Nullarbor and killing thousands and thousands of rabbits. What then happened was that the populations of eagles and other birds that fed off the rabbits were starved out and moved into the outer areas of the wheatbelt. In some areas, farmers were shooting very, very many wedge-tailed eagles at that time, because they appeared in droves. They were hungry and they had turned to picking up not just dead animals but also live ones. That is the sad or unintended side of the virus that was used to remove rabbits from the Nullarbor plain—it affected a balance that had been established over many years. I would like to think we could get a similar virus that would eliminate the cane toad. I know a lot of work has been done in that area, but still we have the encroachment of cane toads from the north. I was up there some time ago and saw waterholes that were covered with cane toads, particularly in the Northern Territory; they were eating native animals as well. A balance has to come out of that and it is always a bit concerning.

There are a few other bits and pieces that we need to look at. The first is to make sure that we have a say when our legislation mirrors commonwealth law. If we go down that line, what will happen if something comes from the commonwealth government that is not quite right for our environment on this side of the country? Do we then move another amendment to mirror the law? Do we just keep following blindly, or do we retain our right to not participate in that side of biological control under state law? What I am trying to say is that sometimes it is easy to say, "Let's follow the federal government; let's look at what they're doing and just mirror it", but we still need to retain our autonomy so that in respect of things on our side of the world that are a bit different from things on the east coast we will be able to put in legislation that impacts on our local issues and not just on global or Australian issues. That concerns me in one way, but in another way I understand why it is being done.

We were told in the briefing we were given that the legislation does not cover a claim for compensation from the Western Australian government if a mutation of a virus were to cause damage to farming areas or farm animals, such as caged rabbits, and the government of the day was liable for that. I certainly understand why we have done that, but, again, what concerns me is who, then, is responsible? Will it go back to the researcher? Will it go back to the farmer who released it? Of course, we have to be very careful about that. I can imagine the costs Australia-wide if there were a claim today for the cane toad. Who brought it in? Who allowed it in? We all know that it was brought in with good intentions, but it has been one of the bigger failures.

Then there are plant species, such as blackberry and doublegee; the list goes on and on. They were all brought in with very good intentions. Up around Geraldton there are plenty of places I would not go without a pair of shoes on. Doublegees can cover the bottom of people's shoes in some areas, and a multitude of sprays are being used to try to eradicate them on farmland. I believe that doublegee was brought in not as a stock food, but actually to be eaten as a green leaf vegetable, although I can be corrected on that. Now we have doublegee all over the state. Anyone who has heard someone get up in the middle of the night in a camping ground to go to the toilet without putting on shoes would certainly know that they are up and about because of all the yelping. They take one step into a patch of the weed, and then their other foot is covered with doublegees as they try to get away. It is so simple for doublegees to be spread. They might be on the tyres of cars or under their mudguards, and then they drop off and away it goes again. There are weeds such as Paterson's curse, arum lily and cape tulip—the list is long and much in need of being revisited. I have noticed in recent times that some of these plants have established themselves where they previously did not exist. I am sure many people in the suburbs would not understand the lovely pink flower, the cape tulip. It is so lovely that they would dig it up and take it home but they do not know how it can destroy good agricultural land if not eradicated immediately.

Biosecurity controls have to be handled with care and national consistency, but leave a pathway open to deal with some issues of our own. An example on the east coast is the carp that have gone mad in the inland rivers and tonnes of native fish have been poisoned. Carp are bottom feeders, and they rip up the bottom of the river, eating all the plants along the bottom. All of a sudden, the river has no structure because the weeds have gone and the carp have multiplied. I am sure people have seen photographs, but it is the destruction of a river system. They have crowded out the native animals and fish, and they are very hardy and can live in very small bodies of water and move on. In recent times, carp have established themselves in Wellington Dam, and at the moment nothing is being done to try to eradicate them. Recently a very large Koi fish, I think it was, of around six

kilograms, caught in Wellington Dam, was shown to me. To explain the size, anyone going fishing would take an esky to put the fish in, but this fish, in an average size esky, was bent up at both ends because it would not fit in.

Mr J.M. Francis: You caught it?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: No, one of my mates caught it.

Mr J.M. Francis: Can you eat carp?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: No, but they are very good for fertiliser, under the lemon tree, without the virus.

This fish is establishing itself and no-one is taking any time or making any effort to get out and stop it before it becomes a major problem. We are lucky that above Wellington Dam there are two step-ups of man-made walls to keep water in the river, and these are not opened up enough in the wintertime to allow the fish to move upstream. Another species of fish—not just the orange Koi or goldfish—is also breeding up, and it has not been identified, although it has certainly been introduced into that water body. It is a carp variety, and certainly a bottom feeder, and we need to look at those things.

One of the other paths we need to take is education. People who have goldfish ponds or tanks need to be made aware that they should not take their fish out and pour them into the river and let them go. This is something that has been done in our waterways. Some of the waterways that feed into the Swan River in the Guildford area now contain exotic fish. What can we do about that? We should carry out research into ways of eradicating those fish. It cannot be done by netting or by stunning with electrodes. We will have to look at some other controls. I am not quite sure whether any research has been done on that. The native fish in the top end of the Swan River are under stress from not only salt water, but also exotic fish. We should be looking at what we are doing. That is why we need this type of legislation. I can imagine that if one of those branches of the fishery was ruined because of a mutation in one of the viruses that were put into the water, fishermen would be saying that they should be compensated.

This bill is much needed in one way, but we should be working much harder towards finding a mutant rabbit calicivirus. Rabbits are very adept at becoming tolerant of viruses, as was the case with the myxomatosis virus, which has been around for many years and seems to come and go. The rabbits will probably take four or five years to develop a strain that will not be affected by this virus, which has happened previously. I watched a documentary on how they become tolerant to the viruses. They feed off their mothers and then grow, and become ill, but because they breed so quickly another generation is on the ground before they die from the virus. Because of their short breeding span, they are able to move on quite quickly. We would like to think that the viruses knock the rabbits over fairly quickly, which they do, but the other side of it is that myxomatosis is one of the cruellest things we could ever see in any animal. They die mainly of starvation because they become weak and their eyes puff up and they cannot see. Sometimes we wonder about whether that is the right way to go about this. I am glad it is not introduced anymore, but it is still around. Just last week a mate of mine shot six rabbits and four of them had myxomatosis. It is quite obvious that the virus is still around the place. I thought it was just about gone—dead and buried—but it is still out there. My mate is not the best shot; he could shoot them only because the rabbits do not move because they are so ill. We do not want to see that type of virus introduced again. Although sometimes we need to be cruel to be kind, those things should be done in a controlled environment, and not let out. Those who have followed the spread of calicivirus will know that it was not released, but that it got away. We are not sure how it got away, but it was released on an island off South Australia and then all of a sudden it was on the mainland. What if the response to that had failed? We would have been in a bit of bother, because it was spreading across Australia.

I support the bill. It is a step in the right direction. I think that between the member for Gosnells and me, we have put forward the opposition's view, although I think the member for Gosnells did a better job than me. The opposition supports the bill.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [4.11 pm] — in reply: I thank the members for Gosnells and Collie–Preston for their contributions to the second reading debate of the Biological Control Amendment Bill 2016. I thank the opposition for its support for a fairly simple bill that is aimed, as I am advised, to clear up fairly simple terminology in the Biological Control Act. Its urgency is based on the planned release of RHDV-K5 virus for rabbit control. As the member for Collie–Preston pointed out, rabbits develop immunity to these viruses over time. They breed very quickly and have short life cycles. They breed in ways that accord with the Darwinist theory of evolution of survival of the fittest. There are some species that develop immunities to certain strains of disease. They breed and others species do not and after a period of time there is a continuation of a pest. Rabbits are an introduced species.

I want to touch on a couple of little things but I am going to go off on a tiny tangent first and take the opportunity to talk about a pest that neither opposition member mentioned but does my head in—that is, Portuguese millipedes. People who live in the Perth hills or near where I live are guaranteed to know all about

the march of the Portuguese millipedes that happens every year. Portuguese millipedes are an introduced species and were first discovered in the Perth hills some 20-odd years ago. In 1988, South Australia released a species of nematode in about 2 000 different locations to eradicate Portuguese millipedes. As a result, the population of Portuguese nematodes in South Australia has been decreasing. I also understand that the nematode that reduces the population of millipedes has been discovered in Perth in recent years. Although it will not provide total control and although there will be a delay of a couple of years before the nematodes spread through the population, hopefully, sooner or later, it will have an impact and we will see a decrease in the annual march of Portuguese millipedes through my electorate. I do not know whether other members have this problem in their electorates, but my office is inundated with complaints from the poor ever-suffering residents of Banjup. For some reason, it occurs probably every second year and millions of these millipedes—that is probably why they are called millipedes—are found crawling up houses. They are hard to get rid of. They leave a yellow stain if they are squished on the garage floor and die, and they stink.

That aside, to sum up the point the member for Gosnells made, in non-scientific terms, it is similar to the story about the old woman who swallowed a spider—that is the history behind releasing something to deal with something else that has been previously released. I cannot help. I am in no way mocking the member, but I am using that analogy to sum up the argument about whether we go down the road of releasing something to catch up with something that has been released and that was maybe released to catch up with something else that has been released, such as cane toads, or whatever it may be.

After receiving some advice from the officers sitting in the back of the chamber, I want to clarify some of the matters that were raised. As I said, the bill is required because around March next year RHDV K5 will be released for rabbit control. The change of definition explicitly removes the term “live” to ensure the use of agents that may be considered not to be alive—that is, specifically for viruses only. There is a relationship to the Biosecurity Council. This bill mirrors legislation between states and the commonwealth. I also point out that all states either are in the process of introducing or have already introduced mirror legislation. This matter requires a national approach, whether we are talking about the spread of cane toads, rabbits or anything else. It is not as though viruses or an awful lot of animals will realise where the South Australian–Western Australian border is. It is not as though we can put up a sign and we can expect them to read it and not cross over the border, particularly when it comes to viruses. The matter requires a national and unified approach. To my understanding, that is what we are trying to achieve today.

The cane toad, for example, was a disaster because its release was not subject to the kind of cost–benefit analysis that takes place before something is declared and released under the act today. There is now a very different set of regulations both in the state and the commonwealth than there was when the cane toad was first released.

The Biosecurity Council is not mentioned in the Biosecurity Act, and it does not need to be. I am told that a specific biological control authority is constituted by the minister and that there is extensive provision for consultation, and that can, of course, include consultation with the Biosecurity Council if the minister sees fit. I am also advised that the relevant distinction between organisms that can be regarded as living things, which is what the amendments are trying to achieve, and viruses that do not meet the criteria for life, will ensure that there is no confusion when dealing with these particular issues. In particular, I pointed out the urgency around the release of RHDV K5.

That is pretty much what I have been asked to provide. I once again thank the opposition for its support of the bill. They are commonsense amendments.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It has been our pleasure.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I understand that I am standing between everyone else going home. I understand that the opposition members attended the briefings and showed some interest in them, and so I say well done.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading

Third Reading

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [4.18 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.