Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 23rd. November, 1948.

CONTENTS.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1, New Tractors and Motor Vehicles Control.

2, Licensing Act Amendment.

3, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.

4, Northampton Lands Resumption.

5, Industries Assistance Act Amendment (Continuance).

6, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act Amendment.

7, State Housing Act Amendment.

8, Supply (No. 2), £3,700,000.

9, Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act Amendment.

10, Health Act Amendment (No. 1).

11, Marriage Act Amendment.

QUESTION.

RAILWAYS.

As to Refreshment Rooms and Dining Cars.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What revenue was received from all railway refreshment rooms and dining cars for the quarter ended the 30th June, 1948?

(2) What was the total expenditure for the same period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) £46,671.

(2) £45,598.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Fairbridge Farm School.

2, Stipendiary Magistrates Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

1, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.

2, Government Railways Act Amendment.

Adopted.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend the Land Act. It contains six amendments, which are dissimilar and therefore the measure is, in my opinion, essentially one for Committee discussion. I have no doubt that it will pass the second reading.

The first amendment deals with the rights of aborigines and their descendants with respect to the selection of land. In 1887 a provision was inserted in the Land Regulations to permit of aboriginal natives and their descendants being granted or leased Crown land of not more than 200 acres. This provision is still in force and is contained in Section 9 of the parent Act. Originally, it appears to have been merely a gesture of goodwill towards the indigenous native and an acknowledgement of his right to possess

a part of his own country. No doubt the provision was made because people in England were complaining about the ill-treatment of natives and the Government of the day probably said, "We will permit the aborigines to take up land." I cannot visualise any other reason, because in 1887 aborigines would not be selecting land even to the limited extent of 200 acres. It was evidently considered that that area was ample for any native purpose.

Native conditions, however, have materially altered since 1887, when the colony was still, so to speak, in its infancy. Many natives are now granted certificates of citizenship rights by which they are deemed to be no longer natives or aborigines and by which they obtain all the rights, privileges and amenities of natural-born or naturalised British subjects. Being no longer natives, they are not bound by Section 9 of the parent Act and so can obtain more than 200 acres of Crown land. From this arises an anomaly. In order to be eligible to apply for a certificate of citizenship rights, an applicant must possess more than one-quarter of native blood. A person of less than quarter caste is not regarded as a native in law and therefore does not have to apply for a certificate of citzenship rights. Unfortunately as a descendant of aborigines he would not be eligible to obtain more than 200 acres of Crown land, and this would be his position if he possessed as little as one-sixty-fourth of native blood.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Have many natives availed themselves of this privilege?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, very few. Personally, I cannot visualise natives taking up land, but if they did so, they would be subject to the same responsibilities as are the whites. They would have to pay land rents and comply with the provisions of the conditional purchase leases. However, if the natives are prepared to take up land they should be given the opportunity, provided they have the money. It does not appear equitable that those of more than quarter caste strain should have an advantage over those with less native blood. The Bill therefore proposes to give all persons of native blood the same rights to secure land as are enjoyed by other people in the State. Although very few natives have ever taken the opportunity to secure land under the parent Act, the Department of Native Affairs and the Lands and Surveys Department agree that this is a reasonable and just provision.

The safeguarding of our Class "A" reserves from Commonwealth acquisition is the subject of the next amendment. Under its Lands Acquisition Act, the Commonwealth excludes itself from the acquisition of any "lands dedicated to or reserved for the use and enjoyment of the people as have been specified by Commonwealth or State proclamation." Unfortunately, our Class "A" reserves have never been dedicated by proclamation. They have been merely created by notice in the "Government Gazette." A proclamation is a more serious and formal procedure than a notice in the "Government Gazette" and, unlike a notice, is made under the Great Seal of the State. The position is therefore that all our Class "A" reserves could be compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth. This flaw in our legislation was brought under notice by the Commonwealth decision to acquire a Class "A" water reserve at Mt. Barker for the purpose of building a post office.

Hon. G. Fraser: Is all this by legal advice?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Definitely. We do not do anything without proper legal advice. A satisfactory agreement was arrived at in the case of the Mt. Barker post office, but that served to emphasise the weakness in the State's position. The amendment provides that all future reserves shall be dedicated by proclamation and that all past dedications shall be regarded as having been made by proclamation. The Bill is therefore retrospective in this particular.

The next amendment deals with reserves that are vested in or leased to organisations or persons holding the land in trust for the purpose for which it was reserved. At present certain organisations such as friendly societies and agricultural societies have power under the Public Institutions and Friendly Societies Lands Improvement Act to mortgage—with the Governor's consent—land held in trust from the Crown. In the event of default, the Act provides that the land shall be discharged from trust. Under the Associations Incorporation Act an association—also with the Gov

ernor's consent—may mortgage lands granted by the Crown, but no provision is made for the freeing of the trust in the case of default. There is no provision made in regard to the mortgaging of reserves by other bodies, and banks will not accept as security a reserve which is held in trust from the Crown and for which there is no statutory authority for the discharging of the trust in the event of default.

On several occasions it has been necessary to introduce a special Bill to authorise the mortgaging of a certain reserve and the discharge of the trust in the event of default. Under the Bill it is proposed to incorporate in the Act a definite policy covering all reserves held in trust. It will give authority for the mortgaging, with the Governor's consent, of such reserves, and for the discharge of the trust should the mortgagee be forced to exercise his power of sale or foreclosure. The next amendment has been recommended by the Chairman of Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank, in his capacity as Chairman of the Repurchased Estates Committee. The Act was amended in 1946 to provide for the establishment of farm reconstruction areas.

For some years steady progress has been made with various reconstruction schemes in the marginal districts, the lake country and salt affected areas. Those schemes were based mainly on a system of linking properties together in order to provide economic units. In those reconstruction areas, properties are allotted to specific settlers and are not available for public selection. I have had considerable experience of that and I have no doubt that members representing the South-East Province have had similar experience. At that time repurchased estates were not taken into consideration. Cabinet subsequently appointed a committee to deal with the reconstruction of repurchased estates. That committee strongly recommends that repurchased estates be included in farm reconstruction areas and that the Rural and Industries Bank be permitted to purchase land set aside as farm reconstruction areas for the purpose of increasing the size of holdings, either to improve the bank's security or to create more economic working units. Had not some farmers had their holdings increased, they would have had to walk off their properties. By linking up properties, economic units were formed.

One amendment, which is long overdue, is for the purpose of increasing from 30s. to £2, the fee payable for the preparation of a Crown grant. From the inception of the colony in 1829 to 1860 the fee was £2, plus 5s. for the officer preparing the grant. In 1860 the entire fee was reduced to £1 and remained at that sum until 1927, when it was increased to £1 10s. I hope it will readily be agreed that the reduction in money value since that time, warrants an increase to £2—apart altogether from the fact that 30s. does not compensate the Lands Department for the work entailed in preparing the grant.

The Bill provides also that where two or more adjoining leases or licenses are registered in the same name, they may be included in the one Crown grant, the fee in such a case being £2 for the first lease or license. That should prove of consider- or license. This should prove of considerable monetary convenience to grantees as it will be possible to include any number of adjoining leases in the one grant. This is undoubtedly a Committee Bill and I feel confident that it will pass the second reading without debate. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.55]: I support the second reading but would like further information regarding the provision for the Governor's consent to a mortgage. As pointed out by the Honorary Minister, it is at present necessary for a Bill to be brought down authorising the mortgaging of land vested in an organisation. I think that is the safer method, because the parliamentary representatives of the area concerned are able to give all the relevant information. I think that method is safer than leaving the question to be decided by the Minister, and it would be better for the society or organisation concerned, particularly if it had to raise funds, because it would give the matter more publicity.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: The Governor's consent to the mortgaging would be necessary.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, but that restricts the inquiry. There will be far more publi-

city if the matter has to be dealt with by Parliament.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [4.58]: I suggest that the Bill be dealt with in Committee and progress reported when we reach the provision on which Mr. Gray desires further information. The Governor, of course would determine any consent to a mortgage, and the point at issue is whether the Governor or Parliament should decide that question.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Assembly's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Assembly now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Honorary Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3—Line 14:—After the second word "time," insert the words "subject to the consent of the Growers' Council."

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I ask the Committee to accept this amendment. It will not do any harm and may do a lot of good. It does tie the hands of the trustees in that they cannot do anything without the consent of the Growers' Council, which is a body of 20 men, including Sir Charles Latham, elected by the growers of the State. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3—Add a proviso:—"Provided that the corporation shall in every year not later than the 31st day of October, take out a balance sheet showing all of its assets and liabilities, making due allowance for such other reserves as are usual in respect of undertakings similar to that carried on by the corporation, together also with a revenue account for the preceding 12 months, and shall within two months of the 31st day of October as aforesaid, forward the balance sheet and revenue account to the Minister for Agriculture for presentation to Parliament. The Minister shall cause a copy of the same to be laid on the Tables of both Houses of Parliament on the first sitting day after receipt thereof."

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

There will be very little hardship occasioned by the trustees presenting these balance sheets to the Minister for laying on the Tables of both Houses of Parliament. I do not know whether it is highly necessary but another place thinks it is.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am sorry to hear the Minister agreeing to the amendment. This is a new departure from any class of business such as the Wheat Pool conducts. I do not know of any person who makes public his balance sheet. By laying the balance sheet of the Wheat Pool on the Table of the House, it would be making it public. That would be a good start if it were desired to make public the balance sheets of all companies. The Wheat Pool is a company registered under the Companies Act, and I would have no objection to its submitting balance sheets to the Honorary Minister for Agriculture for his information. After all, they would contain the whole of the transactions of the organisation, and I consider it is an unwarranted interference with its activities. I am concerned that a precedent might be created.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Will it not be to the advantage of farmers?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No. Each farmer gets a copy of the balance sheet every year.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Every farmer?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, every farmer who is a contributor to the fund, just as a shareholder obtains a balance of the activities of his company. It is certainly an unusual procedure, and should not be followed unless it were adopted with all companies. I ask the Committee to vote against the amendment.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No objection came from the trustees of the Wheat Pool concerning this amendment. If 10,000 farmers get a copy of the balance sheet, what does it matter that other people should see it? Sir Charles is one of the members of the Growers' Council, and he is perhaps a little more concerned than I am, but I have no objection to the amendment. Aspersions have been cast on the Wheat Pool, and if the amendment will allay any doubt, we should agree to it. The Wheat Pool is a semi-public body. The newspapers have made some remarks about the wheatgrowers being taken down for their money, and if the amendment will allay any suspicions in regard to the trustees of the Wheat Pool, I think it ought to be accepted.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	11
Noes	7
Majority for	4

AYES.

Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. R. J. Boylen
Hon. W. J. Mann	(*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. A. L. Loton	(*Teller.*)

Question thus passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th November.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [5.15]: This is an important Bill and is the same, with a few exceptions, as the one introduced last session. Like the railways, the tramways during the war fell into a bad state of repair and nobody could reasonably offer any criticism of that. We have 17 miles of single line and 18 miles of double line. I consider the single lines to have been an abomination and a nuisance to the public ever since they were laid down. I can imagine that the general public would welcome the duplication of those lines or their replacement by trolley bus or motor bus services.

I should like to see the trolley bus system extended, because I consider it the most comfortable and speedy method of travelling and it is certainly very popular with the general public. I have always thought it would be an excellent idea to extend the existing trolley bus route from Claremont to Fremantle. To have that service terminating at Claremont is certainly uneconomic, and the extension would be welcomed by the people of Mosman Park, Cottesloe and Fremantle because it would afford them quick and comfortable means of travelling between the port and the city. Of course, the private bus companies would not approve of such an extension. I should not advocate that they be prevented from running, but the trolley bus service could be regarded as a complementary service and the bus companies could further develop their service along Canning Highway. The bus companies have certainly given the public a good service, but it cannot compare with that provided by the trolley buses.

A huge amount of money will be required to bring the system up to date and it will be a long time before the department will be in a position to consider extending the trolley buses to Fremantle. However, I hope it will be considered and put into operation as quickly as possible. I do not agree with a lot of the criticism of the tramway system. There can be no disagreement with the statement that large trams in the city areas are the best means of moving crowds in a confined area. A big handicap to old people is the height of the steps, and it is a pity that this difficulty cannot be overcome.

The people of Western Australia move very leisurely as compared with those in the Eastern States. There has always been sharp criticism of the time required for a tram to empty its load and this criticism is well founded when we consider the time occupied in the Eastern States. However, this is often made a reason to justify our people strolling about Perth in a leisurely fashion even at busy times. In the busy streets this causes great inconvenience to people who are in a hurry.

I feel sure that the appointment of a general manager—the Bill proposes that he shall be appointed for seven years and shall be subject to the Minister—will prove successful. It should certainly be an inducement to the employees and the department to improve the service. With a good understanding existing between the department and the employees and a determination to give service to the people, a big improvement could be made in the way the trams are run in the metropolitan area. The new manager will have a tremendous job to bring the tramways up to date and the cost will be heavy. The Bill provides for a radical change in the auditing of accounts. This work in future will be undertaken by the Auditor General.

If any employee is guilty of a breach of the traffic laws, he is not to be penalised more than once for the same offence and provision is made for the right of appeal to an appeal board. This should find favour with employees on the wages staff as well as the salaried staff, as the appeal board will consist of a magistrate as chairman, a person to represent the general manager, and a person elected by the salaried staff or the wages staff as the case may be.

Provision is made to secure close co-operation between the local authorities and the department in the matter of opening up roads. Except in cases of emergency, and especially where a big job has to be undertaken, more than three days' notice should be given of such work. The Bill also provides for contracts and for the variation of contracts between the Minister and local authorities. I support the second reading and hope that, under new management, the department will find it possible to give the people a better service. To acquire new vehicles will take a long time owing to the shortage of materials, but the Bill provides a sure foundation for success and should redound to the advantage of the Government and of the people.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Bylaws:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Paragraph (a) of the proviso to Subclause (2) contains a reference to the Navigation Act, the Boat Licensing Act and the Jetties Act. These Acts, with the exception of the Jetties Act, have now been superseded by the Western Australian Marine Act. There is no need to mention the Jetties Act in the Bill as it is covered by the words "any other Act" in Subclause (3). I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (a) of the proviso to Subclause (2) the words "Navigation Act, 1904, the Boat Licensing Act, 1878, the Jetties Act, 1926" be struck out and the words "Western Australian Marine Act, 1948," inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (3) the words "Navigation Act, 1904, the Boat Licensing Act, 1878, the Jetties Act, 1926" be struck out and the words "Western Australian Marine Act, 1948" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 30—agreed to.

Clause 31—Depreciation:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I congratulate the Minister for having made provision for depreciation and obsolescence. One of the tragedies in connection with the Western Australian Government Railways is the fact that no provision was made for the depreciation or obsolescence of its assets.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 32 to 52, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.38] in moving the second reading said: The Bill contains only two provisions, both of which are designed to extend the services given to the public by nurses. These provisions are, firstly, the creation of a new class of nurse to be know as "mothercraft nurses" and,

secondly, the reduction of the minimum age from 21 to 18 years at which a trainee may commence her course as a tuberculosis nurse.

The training of girls as mothercraft nurses has been recommended by the Nurses Registration Board. The personnel of this board comprises Dr. Cook, Commissioner of Public Health, who is the chairman, Dr. Thompson, Inspector General of the Insane, two private medical practitioners representing the B.M.A., one of whom is an obstetrician, and five representatives of the various phases of the nursing profession. It is proposed that these girls will be trained at the Alexandra Home for Women, in Highgate, which, as members are probably aware, caters for single women expecting their first confinement. The infants are not born there, but at the King Edward Memorial Hospital. The mothers, however, go to the Alexandra Home for their convalescence and the children are cared for there for some years while the mothers are at work.

The course will be of 15 months' duration, and will comprise 12 months' training in mothercraft and three months in the care of the pre-school child, i.e. from 18 months to six years of age. The curriculum will include lectures by instructors approved by the Commissioner of Public Health, and practical instruction in the wards from the medical officer of the home, the matron and a registered infant health nurse, and in the kindergarten by a qualified nursery kindergarten teacher. At the end of their course, the girls will take an examination and on passing will be entitled to a certificate of competency.

There will be room for 15 trainees at a time and the trained staff at the home will comprise a matron, an assistant matron and a mothercraft nurse. The age at which the girls may commence training will be 17 years. This age was selected as it was feared that if girls had to wait until they were older before they could commence training, they would probably be absorbed into other employment. Girls ordinarily desiring to be trained as nurses cannot commence until they are 18 years of age. Trainees will be required to have obtained either the Junior certificate, to have passed the seventh standard in school, or to possess an equivalent standard of education.

These girls would not be nurses in the generally accepted sense of the word but actually would be scientifically trained nursemaids or, as they are sometimes termed, "nannies." They would not attend the mother prior to confinement, their duties being to care for the baby on discharge with its mother, from the hospital. Their engagement would include all work in connection with an infant, such as its washing, food preparation, and other attention. They would not be required to cook for the family or to do any housework.

It is felt by the Nurses Registration Board that these trained girls would be of incalculable benefit to infant life. The importance of the proper care of an infant during the first few weeks of its life cannot be over-emphasised. The Commissioner of Public Health states that infantile mortality in Western Australia is far too high. Trained mothercraft nurses are also a valuable adjunct to the Child Welfare and the Public Health Departments.

In Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, private organisations under such expert direction as that of Lady Cilento, Dr. Margaret Harper and Dr. Scantlebury have developed private training schools of such efficiency that their certificates have a world-wide reputation. In Tasmania the standard of training is prescribed by the Nurses Registration Board, and in South Australia steps are being taken to transfer this function from the Health Department to the Nurses Registration Board. It is hoped that this training scheme will result in a steady flow into the community of young women adequately trained to care for infants in the first few weeks of their lives, thereby assisting to reduce the infantile mortality rate.

The other amendment proposes that girls desiring to become tuberculosis nurses should be permitted to commence their training at the age of 18 instead of 21 years. As members are no doubt aware, tuberculosis nurses undergo a training course of two years and are restricted to nursing tuberculosis patients. The Bill proposes that their training shall be undertaken at the Wooroloo Sanatorium or at any hospital that may be opened specially to deal with tuberculosis. The matter of the age at which girls should commence their T.B. nursing training was

fully debated in this Chamber 12 months ago when it was decided that it should be 21. Since then a vast amount of knowledge concerning tuberculosis and its incidence among nurses, and in the different age groups, has been acquired by the medical profession.

I received a report today from Dr. Henzell, who, members will recollect, is the Director of the Tuberculosis Control Branch of the Public Health Department. He is a man extremely well-known, not only in Western Australia and Australia, but also oversea, as one who has a vast experience and knowledge in connection with tuberculosis. He informs me as follows:—

Within recent years much investigation has taken place in Britain, Europe and North America into the problems involved in the prevention of tuberculosis in hospitals and sanatorium nurses.

The findings of these investigations have appreciably modified views formerly held, and important milestones in our knowledge have been supplied by the publication this year of the report "The Prophit Tuberculosis Survey on Tuberculosis in Young Adults." This survey was commenced in 1935 and was sponsored by the Royal College of Physicians of London. A group of 10,000 young adults has been followed up for 10 years and the statistical relationship between the occurrence of tuberculosis in the subjects of the survey in this period, and their race, age, sex, home and other environment, previous occupation and present occupation was closely and accurately studied. The group included 5,000 nurses from various London hospitals.

In addition numerous other reports on investigations in the incidence of tuberculosis in hospital and sanatorium nurses have been published within the past 4 or 5 years. Certain definite opinions have been formed and these have been based on ascertained facts; the evidence on which these opinions have been based may be summarised as follows—

(1) Pulmonary tuberculosis is very rare under the age of 15 years.

(2) It is comparatively rare between the ages of 15 and 17 years.

(3) In young adults, commencing at the age of 18 years there is an increase in their susceptibility to the disease, reaching a maximum at the age of 25 years. The death rate in England and Wales in young women in the age group 15-19 is 35 per 100,000 compared with the death rate in the age group 20-23 of 63 per 100,000.

(4) Young adults who have not previously come into contact with infectious cases of the disease, may, on doing so, develop what is called their "primary infection," which is shown by the conversion of their tuberculin test (Mantoux) from negative to positive. In the vast majority (96 per cent.) no harm whatever results; in fact, in dealing with this primary infection, the body develops a relative immunity to subsequent infections. In the remainder pulmonary tuberculosis develops, and in about half the cases, within 12 months of the infection. In the case of hospital and sanatorium nurses who remain under constant medical supervision, their disease is discovered at a very early stage and responds readily to treatment. Thus during the past six years girls diagnosed while at the Wooroloo Sanatorium and the Royal Perth Hospital have all recovered or are recovering. Many have resumed nursing duties; some are engaged in other work and others have married and have had children. There have been no deaths.

(5) The incidence of tuberculosis in hospital nurses with a negative Mantoux is at least four times higher than it is in nurses with a positive Mantoux. In some reports the difference has been much greater.

(6) Vaccination of a Mantoux negative nurse with B.C.G. will convert her tuberculin reaction to positive and will afford her a substantial protection against contracting the disease.

(7) In any routine survey of young adults it is found that the incidence of disease in age groups 21-25 years exceeds that in the age group 18-21 years.

(8) There is evidence that a primary infection which occurs before the age of 21 leads to lower morbidity and mortality rates than a primary infection occurring in ages 21 to 25 years.

(9) It is considered that if a Mantoux negative young adult between the ages of 18 and 25 is to come into contact with cases of the disease, there might be less risk at the age of 18 than at the age of 21 owing to the increasing susceptibility to the disease with increasing age, up to 25. This view is supported by Professor Burnett of Melbourne who is an authority on epidemiology of world-wide repute.

(10) The incidence of disease of nurses in general hospitals exceeds that of nurses in sanatoria by approximately 50 per cent. The reasons for this will follow.

Consideration of these facts has led to a modification of ideas and of the procedure to prevent the spread of the disease in nursing staff.

It can readily be appreciated that the risk to the nurse occurs more in the unknown case than in the known. Many cases of tuberculosis are admitted to general hospitals for treatment of conditions other than tuberculosis, the existence of which might not be known to the hospital authorities. The nurse would therefore be unaware of the necessity to take precautions to protect herself while attending to such cases. Accordingly the practice has developed of x-raying the chest of all hospital in-patients and out-patients, and it has been found that the incidence of tuberculosis in them is usually much higher than it is in the rest of the community. The figures vary according to different countries, being from 1 per cent. to 3 per cent. It is recom-

mended that all nurses in general hospitals and sanatoria should be trained in the precautions to be adopted in the nursing of such cases, so that she can protect herself. The fact that this training is essential in the general training of a nurse has been recognised in some countries, and arrangements have been made for nurses to spend at least three months of their training in the tuberculosis wards of a hospital or sanatorium.

This practice is being carried out in the U.S.A. and Britain. A notable instance is that of University College Hospital in London (one of the foremost medical schools in the world) where every nurse is sent for 3 months to King Edward VII. Sanatorium, Midhurst, Sussex, the Medical Superintendent of which, Dr. Geoffrey Todd, an eminent English tuberculosis physician, reporting that the results have been highly satisfactory.

An interesting point is that in another famous English sanatorium, the Cheshire Joint Sanatorium, Market Drayton, the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Peter Edwards, who is also eminent in the tuberculosis world, has adopted the practice of employing pre-nursing trainee girls from the ages of 15-18 in the kitchen and on the domestic staff of his sanatorium. This is done until they reach the age of 18; then they can commence their training as nurses in the wards.

The vaccination with B.C.G. of student nurses who are Mantoux negative on commencing their training is developing in Scandinavia, the United States and Canada. Valuable results have been almost universally reported, particularly those of Ferguson of Saskatchewan, who under controlled conditions during the years 1934-43 involving 2,800 hospital nurses and 1,200 sanatorium nurses, found that this vaccination reduced the incidence of tuberculosis in hospital nurses to 25 per cent. of the group which have not been vaccinated, and, in the case of the Sanatorium nurses, 20 per cent. of the group which had not been vaccinated. Recent surveys under controlled conditions have suggested that so far from there being an added risk in coming into contact with cases of tuberculosis at the age of 18 in comparison with nurses of older age groups, it is likely that the reverse is the case.

The lessons to be learnt from this recent work are clear—

1. Every nurse who is handling cases of pulmonary tuberculosis must be instructed in the precautions which she is to adopt.

2. It is the responsibility of every general hospital to determine whether any of its patients are suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis.

3. Every trainee nurse in a general hospital should spend some of her time in tuberculosis wards in a sanatorium or tuberculosis hospital.

4. All nurses commencing training with a negative Mantoux reaction should receive B.C.G. vaccination.

It is interesting to note that at the Royal Perth Hospital, all hospital patients have been having chest x-ray examinations for nearly two years. Dr. Anderson reports that up to the present, the results appear to be that there is a very marked lowering of the incidence of tuberculosis in the nursing staff.

It should also be noted that the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories in Melbourne are now producing B.C.G. and it is promised that this will be made available for use in hospital nurses at about the end of this year.

These aspects of the problem have been considered in the past at the National Health and Medical Research Council. The Tuberculosis Committee of this Council held a meeting on the 12th and 13th of this month and passed resolutions unanimously to the effect that there was no added risk in employing nurses at the age of 18 years in tuberculosis wards, in comparison with nurses at the age of 21 years and over, and that in the interest of the prevention of the disease in the nurses, it was highly desirable for all nurses in training to spend some months of their time in tuberculosis wards or sanatoria.

This meeting was attended by the writer and there were present in addition, Dr. H. Wunderly, the Commonwealth Director of Tuberculosis, Dr. Cotter Harvey, of Sydney, Dr. Bell Ferguson, the Director of Tuberculosis in Victoria, and Dr. Darcy Cowan, of Adelaide, all of whom are eminent physicians in the sphere of tuberculosis in Australia.

Many authorities consider that if all the precautions outlined above are adopted, the incidence of tuberculosis in nurses will fall to a level lower than that of girls of the same age group in the general population, who are not so protected.

That report is signed by Dr. Henzell. I think from what I have read, members will see that there is no risk involved in reducing the age. After having given Dr. Henzell's opinion, I do not think there is any need for me to say any more about the measure and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

BILL—GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.56] in moving the second reading said: I suppose one would be quite correct in saying that the guardianship of infants is something that concerns every man and woman in the community. In introducing legislation of this kind, there are four points to be taken

into consideration and they are as follows:—

1. To lay down the principle that the paramount consideration is the interests of the child.

2. To give the mother a greater right to be heard in matters affecting the child.

3. To declare the law on the subject in clear terms.

4. To simplify proceedings as to custody and guardianship of infants.

It is with the latter point that my Bill deals. However, before proceeding, there are one or two extracts to which I would like to refer. There have often been arguments about who are to be termed "infants," and I intend to read from Halsbury's "The Laws of England," published in 1911. This publication sets out very clearly, from the English point of view, what an infant is. It reads as follows:—

Infancy is, in English law, the term applied to the period of life, whether in males or females, which precedes the completion of the twenty-first year, and persons under that age are called infants. The age of twenty-one years is called full age, and anyone who has attained full age is competent to do all that the law requires or enables a person in his or her position to do, except in the cases of lunatics, idiots, and persons under disability on account of conviction for crime and, to a certain extent, married women. But infants have a very limited power of legal action, and their interests are carefully protected by the law, since they are regarded as of immature intellect and imperfect discretion.

My Bill also deals with the portion which says they are carefully protected. Later on I will show that the Bill is being introduced to make up for something that the law does not, at the moment, provide in a simple manner. Following on that extract we find, also in the same volume, set out what is meant by "parental right." It states—

A father, and after his death, a mother, has by parental right the guardianship of the person of an infant child up to the age of twenty-one, as his natural guardian in the wider sense of the term.

Both a father and mother have power, if under age by deed, and if of full age by deed or will, to appoint persons to act as guardians of an infant child, in the case of a father, after his death, and, in the case of a mother, after the death of herself and the father, if the child is then an infant and unmarried.

It goes on to say—

Where a father appoints guardians and the mother survives him, she is joint guardian with them during her life. Where he appoints none, or those appointed by him die or refuse to act, the mother is sole guardian, but the court having jurisdiction in the matter may, if it thinks fit, from time to time appoint guardians to act jointly with her.

It continues further—

The mother may, by deed or will, provisionally nominate persons to act as guardians of an infant child after her death jointly with the father, and the court having jurisdiction in the matter, upon being satisfied that the father is for any reason unfit to be the sole guardian of the child, may confirm their appointment or make such other order in respect of the guardianship as it thinks fit.

Where each of the parents appoints guardians, the guardians appointed by each act as joint guardians after the death of both parents.

The High Court of Justice, on being satisfied that it is for the welfare of the infant, may remove the mother or any testamentary guardian from the office of guardian, and may also, if the welfare of the infant appears so to require, appoint another guardian in place of the guardian so removed.

Then we find that New South Wales dealt with the matter in an Act known as the Infants' Custody and Settlements Act, 1899-1934, which shows that the legislation has been brought fairly well up to date. I may mention that there are not many special Acts that have been passed in Australia dealing with this particular question. In the New South Wales Act, Subsections (7) and (8) of Section 5 read—

(7) In any case in which a parent of an infant is dead, the Court may, on the application of any relative of that parent, make such order as to access to the infant by such relative as to the court seems fit.

(8) Any order made under this section may, on the application either of the father or the mother or any guardian of the infant, be varied or discharged by a subsequent order.

From the standpoint of guardianship of an infant, there is practically nothing else on the question of custody and settlement. Reverting to our own State, not much mention of the subject appears in the Supreme Court Act, but in Subsection (11) of Section 25 the following appears—

Subject to the express provisions of any other Act in questions relating to the custody and education of infants, the rules of equity shall prevail.

In the Supreme Court Rules, we find that under Order LV, dealing with Chambers in Equity, the powers of the Court to deal with matters, include the following—

(7) Applications as to the guardianship and maintenance or advancement of infants.

In 1920, the Guardianship of Infants Act was passed and in 1926 a further Guardian-

ship of Infants Act was dealt with. Why these two Acts have not be consolidated, I do not know. They are to be read in conjunction with one another and the 1926 Act was not an amendment of the 1920 Act.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It says so.

Hon. G. FRASER: It does not amend that Act, but sets out that it is to be construed as one with the Guardianship of Infants Act, 1920, and that the two Acts may be cited together as the Guardianship of Infants Acts, 1920 and 1926. I certainly cannot understand why they have been allowed to remain on the statute book in their present form instead of being consolidated. Those two measures deal with certain features, but I am submitting the Bill now before the House to fill in a gap. The Child Welfare Act passed in this State in 1947 set up a Children's Court and it sets out that the court—

(d) Shall exercise the powers and authorities of a court of summary jurisdiction under the Guardianship of Infants Act, 1926, and notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, the jurisdiction conferred by this paragraph shall be exercised by the special magistrate sitting alone or with one person appointed a member of the court.

I mention that paragraph to indicate that the Children's Court has power to deal with the matter of guardianship of infants. In the Guardianship of Infants Act, 1926, dealing with the rights of the surviving parent as to guardianship, it sets out in Section 5—

(1) On the death of the father of an infant, the mother if surviving, shall subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly with any guardian appointed by the father. When no guardian has been appointed by the father, or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the father is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the Court may if it thinks fit appoint a guardian to act jointly with the mother.

(2) On the death of the mother of an infant, the father, if surviving, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly with any guardian appointed by the mother. When no guardian has been appointed by the mother, or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the mother is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint a guardian to act jointly with the father.

Then again in Section 6, the following subsections may be quoted—

(1) The father of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after his death.

(2) The mother of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after her death.

(3) Any guardian so appointed shall act jointly with the mother or father, as the case may be, of the infant so long as the mother or father remains alive, unless the mother or father objects to his so acting.

The Chief Secretary: Is not Subsection (4) of use to your argument?

Hon. G. FRASER: It merely elaborates and does not add to the point I wish to make. I have read those provisions to indicate to the House that the Act deals with the position on the death of the father or of the mother. The point I am covering in the Bill I am submitting relates to the situation where both the parents are dead. The Acts I have referred to are entirely silent on that phase and no provision is made at all to deal with the situation where both the parents are dead. Probably the Chief Secretary will tell me that it is inherent in the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to deal with matters of this description, and so it is.

The point remains that we have special Guardianship of Infants Acts under which matters are dealt with by the Children's Court which can only act where either one or other of the parents is dead but not where both are dead. Recently I had occasion to deal with a matter relating to the appointment of a guardian of a child whose parents were both dead. I approached the Child Welfare Department to see whether one of its officers would take over the application in the interests of those concerned but I was informed that the department had not the necessary power. It was then that I discovered that the existing legislation did not deal with the situation where both the parents were dead.

There have been magistrates on the bench of the Children's Court who, when such applications came before them, assumed that because the Act enabled them to deal with an application where one parent was alive, it could act where both parents were dead, and issued judgments accordingly. I interviewed the present occupant of the Children's Court bench and asked him what he would do if such an application came before him. He told me he would not grant any such application because the Act did not give him the power to do so. He informed me that he had refused applications on that ground.

The object of the Bill I am submitting to the House is to fill the small gap that I discovered, and will add a new section to the Act, reading as follows—

Where on the death of the surviving parent of an infant, there is no appointed guardian of the infant, or a guardian or guardians has or have been appointed but is or are dead or cannot be found or refuses or refuse to act, the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint any person or persons to act as guardian or guardians of the infant, and make such order as to the custody of the infant and the right of access thereto of any person (whether a relative of the infant or not) as to the court seems fit.

I would not have introduced the Bill were the case I mentioned an isolated one. From the inquiries I made, I ascertained that similar instances have come under the notice of the Children's Court. I interviewed the Minister for Housing before I decided to submit the amending Bill. He informed me that he regarded the measure as worthy of support and intimated that he could not understand why the legislation had been allowed to remain in its present state for so many years. He pointed out that the Supreme Court could deal with such matters where that course became necessary, but I think the Bill will improve the position.

It will be seen that I have not submitted the Bill without consultation with those who know something about the situation. I particularly included the reference to a relative because it would be better to leave the court to decide where an application was made concerning a relative and someone who might not be a relative. I think the English Act includes some reference to relatives having access to a child. In the circumstances, I thought it would be wise not to tie the court down to giving the guardianship to a relative, although probably in 99 out of 100 cases it would be a relative who made the application. The Bill is designed merely to fill in a gap that exists in the guardianship of infants legislation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [6.12]: The law is not quite as bad as Mr. Fraser made out. What has happened in the past is that where a child was left without any parent, someone obviously had charge of the child and continued in that capacity. If there were a dispute, the somewhat clumsy procedure adopted was to take the matter to court and have the infant charged as a neglected child.

Hon. G. Fraser: I wan to avoid that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I agree. In such a case, the court would make an order committing the child to the care of the State and it thereupon would become a ward of the State. The Child Welfare Department would say to the person who had been in charge, "Very well, Mrs. Jones, you can continue as the foster mother." I appreciate what Mr. Fraser wants to do. An effort was made last year to avoid the necessity of charging children with being neglected, which was a very stupid procedure. The Bill, so far as I can see, will be very useful, although its provisions will seldom be availed of. I see no objection to it.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [6.14]: I would like to ask Mr. Fraser whether his Bill will take away the rights of a relative.

The Chief Secretary: No, it deals only with the position where both parents are dead.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: A relative could hardly include parents.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I wish to know whether this Bill will override the authority of a close relative to have control of a child. I do not mean that the close relative should adopt a child, but should act as its guardian. Frequently, a mother passes away and her sister accepts responsibility for her children. The best way to ensure that a child is properly looked after is to allow it to remain in the family. Will the sponsor of the Bill say whether the Bill is intended to deal only with such children as have no close relatives? I do not wish to oppose the Bill, but would like that assurance from him before supporting it.

HON. G. FRASER (West—in reply) [7.33]: The English Act stipulates that a relative may make application; but in drawing up this measure, we took into consideration that a relative might not be the most suitable person to be made the guardian of a child. The words "and the right of access thereto of any person (whether a relative

of the infant or not)" were deliberately inserted, thus enlarging the scope of the guardianship of a child. It is only natural to assume that if a relative and an outsider both applied for the guardianship and the court was satisfied that the relative was the person who could most suitably look after the child, it would award the guardianship to the relative. But there may be cases, as, indeed, there are, where the court would take into consideration that the relative was not a suitable person, and in such instances it would grant the guardianship to someone else. If there is no near relative, of course an outsider would be given the guardianship. The whole matter is left to the discretion of the court, should there be a dual application.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. J. Mann in the Chair; Hon. G. Fraser in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of principal Act:

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am still in a quandary. Will it be necessary for a close relative of a child at the time of the death of the surviving parent to make an application to the court?

The Chief Secretary: In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred there would be no need to do so.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The child may be in the home of a close relative and may have been living there for some months before the death of its surviving parent; it may even have been living there for a longer period because one of the parents was not considered to be suitable to care for the child. Will that close relative have to apply to the court for the guardianship of the child?

Hon. G. FRASER: No. At present, as Sir Charles Latham has said, a near relative takes charge of the child. An inspector of the Child Welfare Department may call and inspect the home conditions and, if he is satisfied that these are good, there will be no interference by the department. If the home conditions are not satisfactory, the department will take steps to have the child declared a neglected child. The Bill simplifies the procedure by which a close relative may be appointed the guardian of a child.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—COUNTRY TOWNS SEWERAGE.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.43] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to authorise the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage to construct, maintain and control sewerage works in certain areas and districts, and for other purposes. Members will agree with me that the time has arrived when, in a State such as ours, sewerage facilities should be installed wherever possible. The system prevailing in some of our country towns at present is nothing but a relic of the Dark Ages and the sooner we do something to remedy it, the better. That is what the Bill seeks to do.

It may appear to members to be a colossal measure; but, although it consists of 50 pages, 120 clauses and four small schedules, approximately only one-quarer of its provisions are not at present on the statute book The remaining three-quarters are culled from measures such as the Metropolitan Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage Act, the Water Boards Act, the Country Areas Water Supply Act and the Health Act.

As its Title intimates, the Bill proposes to give the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage the power to construct, maintain and control sewerage works in certain areas and districts. The terms "area" and "district" require some amplification. An "area," or to give it its full title a "sewerage area," may apply to any portion of the State not within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage Act, which serves an area bounded to the north by Waterman's Bay and Herne Hill and in the south by Rockingham, Safety Bay, and the eastern boundary of the Serpentine catchment area. An "area" could be of any size and would be consti-

tuted and named by the Governor in Executive Council. A "district" may be the whole or part of an area.

The object of creating districts is to facilitate the charging of different rates within an area. For instance, a scheme may be commenced in a certain area and apposite rates charged to users. Subsequently, the scheme may be extended to another part of the same area, where construction and installation costs might be entirely different from those involved in the original construction, which is easily understood. It follows then that the rate charges would not be similar to those applying in the first district. The formation of districts will, therefore, enable the keeping of separate rate books, accounts and valuations for the various districts. The principle of areas and districts is not original, having been adopted from the Water Boards Act.

The Bill, when it becomes an Act, will be administered by the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage and the salaried staff will be appointed under the Public Service Act, suitable provision also being made for the appointment of wages officers, temporary clerks, and professional and technical advisers. There will not be many such officers at first but, as essential commodities become more freely available, it is hoped that the scheme will be extended to all the country towns where it is necessary. It will be noted that the first clause provides that the Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation. This is necessary so that the proclamation shall coincide with the gazettal of bylaws and regulations.

The object of the Bill is to provide, where possible, adequate sewerage services outside the metropolitan area. It provides that at the request, or with the consent, of a local authority, the Government may take over the local authority's sewerage scheme. There is no intention of compulsory acquisition unless, of course, such action should be necessary to prevent the total failure of any scheme. If the local authority could not carry on, the Government might wish to take over. As members are probably aware, municipalities have authority under the Municipal Corporations Act to construct their own sewerage schemes and road boards possess similar powers as health authorities under the Health Act. At present there are local authority schemes at Kalgoorlie and Northam, and partially completed schemes at Geraldton and Narrogin.

There are obvious circumstances militating against a rapid extension of sewerage activities, the principal one being the sparse and scattered population of the State. The construction of sewerage works is a costly process and inevitably leads to a substantial increase in rates in the areas sewered. For this reason, sewerage activities will have to be confined to the larger centres. It is estimated that within the next six years the towns likely to be adequately sewered will be Albany, Boulder, Bunbury, Busselton, Collie, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Manjimup, Narrogin and the remainder of Northam. Some of these, of course, as I have mentioned, have sewerage facilities to a certain extent at present. The Government feels, taking all the circumstances into consideration, that the minimum area that can be sewered in any district should include 600 houses. It is not intended, however, to create such a minimum qualification and no such provision is included in the Bill. Sewerage works will be commenced in any area whenever necessary.

So far as is possible, construction methods will be similar to those in the metropolitan area. It must be borne in mind, however, that local conditions will affect disposal methods. The terrain of any area will be an important factor, it being realised that the disposal system of a hills town would have to be different from that used on swampy ground or on flat land by the coast. The most important factor in a successful sewerage system is a constant and dependable water supply, which unfortunately many towns do not possess at present. It is well known that water supplies throughout the State are generally insufficient, but with the advent of the comprehensive water supply scheme in the Great Southern districts and the raising of the wall at Mundaring, it should be possible to extend sewerage facilities to all the towns I have mentioned, and possibly to others as well.

In considering a measure such as this, the health aspect comes into the picture to a large extent, and I feel sure members will agree that such a scheme is desirable. It has been said that many people prefer to install septic tanks in unsewered areas,

but the fact remains that comparatively few people do so, and, in any event, I do not think a septic tank system is in any way comparable with deep sewerage. However, when the comprehensive water scheme is in operation a different tale may be told, and it is hoped that it will be possible for towns that now lack sufficient water to be equipped with sewerage systems.

One aspect that will appeal to members is the improvement in health conditions that should follow the installation of sewerage systems. It may be suggested that the provision of septic tank installations is preferable to sewerage services. Septic tanks, although admirable, are not superior to sewerage services. Many types of ground, such as clay, swamp or sandy foreshore, are not suitable for septic tanks. Also, a sewerage system provides complete removal and after-treatment facilities.

So far as circumstances and local conditions permit, all provisions relating to the initiation of the metropolitan scheme will apply to the commencement of country services. The State would meet construction costs and rate properties in precisely the same manner as in the metropolitan area. I would point out that the metropolitan scheme has functioned successfully since 1909 and the department's technical advisers state that the same principles can be applied satisfactorily to country districts.

As many occupiers would find it difficult to finance the cost of connection to their present premises, arrangements similar to those embodied in the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act are made for deferred payments. Payments would be made in not more than 24 quarterly instalments, interest being at the rate of 5 per cent. or at any other rate that may be prescribed. Five per cent. is the interest rate charged under the metropolitan Act.

A sewerage scheme is now being installed at Albany under Section 11 of the Public Works Act, which gives authority for the construction of sewerage and other works. This is the first sewerage works to be undertaken under that Act and is being carried out by arrangement with the local authority. No provision exists in the Public Works Act, however, for rating, bylaws or the permanent placing of works on private property. Hence the Bill is necessary for these purposes.

The Bill does not make it incumbent on local authorities to request the Government to construct their sewerage works. Of course, if the local authorities wish to undertake the work for themselves, they can do so; but I feel sure the majority will prefer to have the work done by the Public Works Department. If they so wish they may install their own projects, but it is doubtful if any will desire to do so. Sewerage works entail the outlay of a great deal of money and would be beyond the means of most local authorities. They also require the employment of technical staff, which local authorities may find it difficult to obtain or to retain. There are other factors, also, which might preclude them from installing their own sewerage systems, and, taking everything into consideration, it is obvious that the Government will be called upon to undertake most of these works.

I think it will be agreed that the Bill represents a desirable forward move in the interests of country centres. Some members may disagree with certain of the machinery clauses of the measure, but I assure the House that every opportunity will be given to discuss the various provisions of the Bill in Committee. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTRICITY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [7.55] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is complementary to that introduced and passed last session, dealing with the supply of electricity to rented houses. On that occasion the proposition was accepted that where the owners neglected the interests of tenants, authority should be given for electric current to be supplied to the premises at the expense of the owner. The present measure will affect a comparatively small number of landlords. It will give relief to tenants who now, owing to the extreme shortage of houses, are forced to remain in dwellings, whereas in different circumstances they would not remain unless the electric wiring was main-

tained in proper condition. Today such tenants have no option but to remain, as other accommodation is not available.

There are, in the metropolitan area, cases where the owners have refused to do any rewiring or repairing of electrical installations. Besides causing inconvenience to the tenant, such neglect is a source of trouble to the supply authorities and also of danger, through fire, to adjoining properties. In addition, there is the risk to the life of the tenants and their children. The Bill was introduced in another place in order to deal with the position that has arisen in this regard. I am sponsoring the measure in this House in the interests of those unfortunate tenants who cannot persuade their landlords to carry out essential electrical repairs to the premises in which they are living.

Safeguards are included in the measure to prevent its provisions being abused. On the report of the inspector, the owner is to be notified that certain repairs must be effected. He is to be given reasonable time in which to have the work done, but in the event of his refusing to put the installation in proper condition, power is given for the supply authority to do the necessary repairs at the expense of the owner.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are you going to make the supply authorities into contractors?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The supply authority would give notice to the contractors to do the work.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The Bill does not say so. It says that the supply authority shall give orders for the work to be done.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Sir Frank Gibson knows more about that, but the supply authorities give an order to the contractors to do the job. However, in Perth and Fremantle, the supply authorities do not install electric wiring.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The Bill suggests that the supply authority will do the work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The Bill does not indicate that. The supply authority shall be entitled to notify a contractor to do the work, and the owner will have to pay the bill. I have closely examined the measure and I think that every precaution has been taken to ensure that no injustice will be done to the owner or the tenant. No thought would have been given to the introduction of a Bill of this character except for the severe housing shortage. I am informed that in some parts of the metropolitan area a small number of indifferent and careless owners will not effect the necessary electrical repairs. Therefore, in the interests of the tenants, their wives and families, this Bill is introduced to ensure that electric light is provided in the houses they may be occupying. That is the short explanation of the measure, and I have much pleasure in moving—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.2 p.m.