STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

GENE TECHNOLOGY BILL 2001 AND GENE TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL 2001

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2002

FIRST SESSION

Members

Hon Christine Sharp (Chairman)
Hon Kate Doust (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Jim Scott
Hon Louise Pratt
Hon Frank Hough
Hon Robyn McSweeney
Hon Bruce Donaldson

Meeting commenced at 10.10 am

BRADLEY, MR LEON
Chairman, Western Grain Growers Division,
Pastoralists and Graziers Association,
examined:

CAPP, MR DAMIAN
Executive Officer,
Pastoralists and Graziers Association,
examined:

The CHAIRMAN: You have both just signed a document titled "Information for Witnesses". Have you both read and understood the document?

Mr Capp: Yes.

Mr Bradley: I have not actually read it, but I take Damian's word for it.

Mr Capp: I gave Leon a precis of what is involved. We have both been through the procedure before.

The CHAIRMAN: There are not too many traps!

Today's proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. Please use the microphones in front of you effectively. Please quote the full title of any document referred to. You will be provided with a transcript of today's proceedings for finalisation. Your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If you wish to say anything this morning of a confidential nature, you have the right to seek a closed session. Your application will then be considered by the committee. Until your transcript has been finalised you must not publish any part of it prematurely. Premature publication means that your transcript is not protected by parliamentary privilege.

Thank you for attending today. Do you have a presentation or statement you would like to make to the committee?

Mr Bradley: Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to express our views on this issue, which has become quite contentious. Our statement is to put our thoughts in the general context of the principles we believe should be observed when making decisions. With the consent of the committee I will go through something I prepared earlier.

We believe that modern agriculture has been a blessing for mankind. We have the safest, most abundant and cheapest food that any generation has ever enjoyed, but this is also proving to be its biggest weakness because it is too easy to take for granted that the supply of food is automatic and timeless. Little over 30 years ago the Indian wheat harvest had never exceeded 12 million tonnes. Paul Ehrilch said that it was impossible for India to feed another 200 million people. Lester Brown of the World Watch Institute stated that the quest to feed humanity was lost, and even predicted famine for the United States. Today, India produces 75 million tonnes of wheat annually and is an occasional exporter. Worldwide food production has doubled in the past 30 years whilst the area under cultivation has increased by only 3.5 per cent. Corn yields in the United States in 1928 were 34 bushels an acre. In 1998 they were 134 bushels an acre. In 1940, 56 million tonnes were produced from 31 million hectares at a yield of 1.8 tonnes a hectare. In 2000, 253 million tonnes were produced from 29 million hectares at a yield of 8.6 tonnes a hectare.

Western Australian farmers have been no slouches in this regard either. A recent Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics study concluded that Western Australian grain farmers had been improving productivity at a staggering rate of four per cent, compounded, for over 20 years. In other words, in the year 2000 Western Australian farmers produced doubled the tonnage that they would have been able to using technology available in 1980. This improvement in productivity is what has kept farming prosperous and viable. Declining real prices for our produce are offset by productivity improvements. As such, profitability is maintained. Adopting and integrating production-enhancing technology is an indispensable factor in ensuring the commercial prospects of Western Australian farming. On a global scale, enhanced productivity is the only way to produce double the amount of food we produce today, which will be required to meet the expected needs of a population of eight billion people by 2025. Happily, this task is not as difficult as it would first appear. The person credited with saving more lives than anyone else in history, Dr Norman Borlaug, the scientist responsible for the green revolution, said that we have the means and technology to meet mankind's food needs for the next 25 years. He stated that only choking interference by politicians and an explosively growing bureaucracy will stop us producing the food we need. His concern about the destructive intervention of politicians was meant to be a prediction but, unfortunately, European hostility to science and technology is contributing to mass famine in Africa today, where 13 million people are at risk of starvation while thousands of tonnes of donated grain are impounded in warehouses. All this suffering exists despite European research involving 81 studies and 400 research teams costing $US65 million concluding that biotech crops pose no greater threat to human health and the environment than traditional varieties.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you able to provide a reference for that research?

Mr Capp: Yes.

Mr Bradley: Hostility to the technology is not confined to Europe. In a media release dated 20 June 2001, the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture declared his intention to apply a five-year prohibition of GMO trials or commercial production of food crops if it was deemed that new regulatory protocols were not working effectively or were inappropriate. He went on to say that he would look at which parts of the State should be GM-free zones. It must have been the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture that Norman Borlaug was referring to when he expressed his fears of choking political intervention and exploding bureaucracy. I would urge this committee - instead of joining the race to the bottom being charted by Mr Chance - to take its lead from the Indian Minister for Agriculture at the time Dr Norman Borlaug's new varieties and techniques were coming available. Resistance to this technology in India at the time was remarkably similar to today in that it was claimed that it would ruin the then current methods of farming; that it was an invitation to all sorts of pests, diseases, and other and imagined terrors; and that it was the technology of foreigners, namely Americans.

[10.20 am]

When Chidambaram Subramaniam was not attending to affairs of state, he was thinking of his obsession - cricket. The garden at his house was mostly taken up by a cricket pitch, where he entertained friends with a game on weekends. In 1966 he ordered that the grounds be dug up, including the cricket pitch, and a new variety of wheat seed be planted. The results were spectacular. The yields doubled those of the local varieties. Soon the pariah seed was in such demand that those who could not buy it stole it. The following year India harvested its biggest ever wheat crop of 17 million tonnes. It was later said that Mr Subramaniam had enabled Indian farmers to achieve more in four years than they had in the previous 4 000.

The PGA believes, as did the Indian farmers of the 1960s, that we must have access to this new knowledge and the freedom to apply it. Farmers should be free to independently evaluate its merits and integrate it into their systems as they see fit. This is the traditional way that innovation and improvements have been adopted by WA farmers, and, by any standard, they must be recognised as

innovative, productive and efficient. The alternative - that politicians and politics should decide what techniques and what varieties of crop plants we grow and that all we have to do for success is faithfully follow their direction - is a curious illusion indeed. Historical records show that political meddling of this nature in agriculture has always had fatal consequences. As long ago as 1727, Jonathan Swift wrote in *Gulliver's Travels* -

> . . . that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve more of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.

The PGA requests that this committee recommend that WA farmers be able to avail themselves of the gift of biotechnology, that trials go ahead and that research be unimpeded. The result will be that we will grow two ears of wheat where one grows today and that in 20 years WA farmers will still be regarded as productive and efficient and as playing a valuable role in supplying the world with food.

The CHAIRMAN: Damian, did you want to add anything?

Mr Capp: No, not at this point.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you table a copy of that statement for us?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon KATE DOUST: A few people who have already made submissions to the committee have expressed concerns about how conventional crops can grow alongside genetically modified crops. They are opposed to GM crops because they are concerned about the impact on their conventional crops. How would you allay their fears and encourage them to participate? How can you prevent that crossover?

Mr Bradley: First, technically the scientific evidence is available. Some of it has been done in WA by Mary Rieger from the crop research centre, and Rick Roush, and I am sure they will be able to provide you with the results of those experiments. We have them here, so we can table them. Essentially, the cross-pollination in a canola field immediately adjacent to a GM field will be so low that it will not be detectable with scientific equipment. I think Mary Rieger's trials showed that the worst result was a cross-breeding of 0.07 per cent, which is seven seeds in 10 000. The more normal result is nine seeds in 100 000. As long as there is a reasonable threshold, which is one per cent or half a per cent, cross-contamination will be many, many times below acceptable levels. The real source of contamination of course will be from the co-mingling of seeds. That is something the farmer controls within his farm through his management; it is not something that a neighbour would have to worry about.

An interesting feature of the argument that has been raised by people is their fear of contamination. You may not be aware of the role that lupins have played in enhancing the productive capacity of many Western Australian light soils. People first started growing lupins in the 1960s in the Wongan Hills-Ballidu shire. It was proved very inconvenient for people who just wanted to grow straight wheat, because at that time radish was sprayed with 2,4-D Ester by aircraft. The 2,4-D used to drift onto the lupins and bowl the lupins over. Of course, that caused the wheat growers to be blamed for the drift. At the time, there was a move within the shire to have lupin growing banned within the shire. Fortunately that did not occur, and the consequence is that WA agriculture achieved a new leap of productivity because of the introduction of lupins.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Are you aware of the study in Mexico that shows that 90 per cent of Mexico's natural corn - a country that does not grow GM crops - is now contaminated with GM genes? Would you say that that is something of a problem?

Mr Bradley: It would be a problem if it were true.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is a scientific study .

Mr Bradley: Unfortunately, the scientific study has been shown to be flawed, and I have a rebuttal to it here.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Can you table that?

Mr Bradley: I will dig it out; it is quite a big file. It was shown that the study was very flawed and was later rejected. The original study you are citing I think was published in the *Nature* magazine.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I saw it in *New Scientist*.

Mr Bradley: Later on it was forced to withdraw it.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I did not see that in *New Scientist*.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you ensure that you table the document you are citing?

Mr Bradley: I might not be able to pull it out straightaway, because I have quite a pile of documents, but Damian and I will find it for you.

Hon JIM SCOTT: You referred to the big production increases that you see improving the lot of the Third World and so on. How much of that increase in total world production has come from GMOs at this stage? Would it not be fairer to say that nitrogenous fertilisers are the reason for that increase?

Mr Bradley: Of course, nitrogenous fertilisers have had a massive impact. My argument is that technology has enabled us to produce more and more food from the same area of land. We regard biotechnology as an extension of the technological advance. To suppress it will arrest the forces of technological advance and thus prejudice the growth of future prospects for producing food.

The CHAIRMAN: Damian, did you want to add something?

Mr Capp: I want to backtrack slightly to the question Kate Doust asked and provide a little more information. Last week I attended a short session at the Broadwater Pagoda Hotel which was hosted by Bayer and Monsanto, two of the companies that are seeking to develop biotech crops. Specifically they are looking at canola at the moment. The question was about the possibility of pollen flow between GM and conventional crops. Extensive work has been done on it. As Leon mentioned, we can table a lot of the work that has been done that shows with a high degree of confidence that the perceived problems can be managed in our cropping landscape.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Are you aware of the StarLink issue in the United States and the broadscale contamination that occurred?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Can you say how that occurred if there is no problem?

[10.30 am]

Mr Bradley: That was not a pollen flow problem; that was a co-mingling problem. StarLink was not authorised by the Food and Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency in the US as a human food; it was authorised as a stock food. The company responsible - I think it was Aventis - made a very bad mistake in accepting a ruling from the Food and Drug Administration and going ahead with the StarLink program. It should have either persisted with attempting to get approval or dropped it altogether, because, being fundamentally equivalent to all the other types of corn, it was inevitable that there would be commingling.

Hon JIM SCOTT: My understanding was that there was both commingling and pollen flow problems, because some organic farms had to shut down, having lost their markets because they were contaminated.

Mr Bradley: You are testing my limits of technical capacity as a humble farmer, but I would have thought corn was a self-pollinator.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Nevertheless, they have had this flow. You have said that you would leave it as a right of people to grow what they want. Does this apply to other farmers who do not want to grow GMO, and to the consumers who do not want to eat it? Is that an equal right?

Mr Bradley: Whatever the research shows about pollen flow in canola, it applies in spades to corn. If it is safe to grow a canola crop immediately adjacent to another canola crop without a high level of contamination, it would be even safer in the case of corn. This applies not only between food crops, but also, say, for crops such as rapeseed grown for fuel, or other varieties of plants bred as pharmaceuticals. The proper management plans should be in place to prevent the commingling of seeds. This is something that can be managed. It is simply something that we do now. For example, we keep feed barley separate from malting barley, and segregate noodle wheat from Australian premium white wheat.

Hon JIM SCOTT: A previous witness gave us a copy of a document from Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, or whatever it is called now. The document included a disclaimer to the effect that, once GMOs are introduced, people will have to be certified to be free of GMOs in this State. One of the concerns I have is about logistics. How do you see this being managed? Where will the grain be tested? Will it be tested on the farm or at the weighbridge? At which point do you see this happening? If it is done on the weighbridge, given that it is rather a lengthy process - I understand a test needs something like five days - would this require the farmers to put a lot more storage on their farms to manage this?

Mr Bradley: You are right about the impracticality of testing on the weighbridge. It will rely on farmers segregating their seeds. Some farmers may actually want to grow GM and non-GM on the same farm. I agree with your view that it will involve more on-farm storage, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. It will happen in the future regardless of whether we have GM or non-GM.

Mr Capp: As you are probably aware, on-farm storage continues to increase throughout the wheatbelt, as more farmers want more flexibility in their own on-farm management, in deciding what they do with their own crop after harvest.

Mr Bradley: I am not sure if CBH has tendered evidence to this committee, but it is running a variety through its system this year that has not previously been grown in Western Australia, and it is testing its system to see whether it can actually maintain its integrity through the system. You would be aware that the CBH system is not exactly designed to handle segregation at this degree of sophistication. It is designed to get bulk grain into the system in a big hurry, and get it out over the course of the year. CBH will have to refine its procedures and protocols to be able to handle it. In the initial stages, I do not see any problem. The quantities would be so small they could be done in containers and never come near the CBH system.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Would that not cost a lot more money?

Mr Bradley: It certainly does, but a lot of grain goes out in containers now, because the official system is so expensive that people can wear the cost of the container at $30 to $40 a tonne and still make money.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: You have asserted that the likelihood of cross-contamination is reasonably minimal. Do you think, therefore, that a farmer growing a GM crop next door to a non-GM crop would be prepared to accept financial liability if the non-GM farmer lost access to markets?

Mr Bradley: First of all, it was not an assertion. What I said was a statement based on the evidence.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Do you think farmers would therefore be prepared to accept that liability, because you are so certain of those facts?

Mr Bradley: If the farmer could demonstrate that he had suffered specific harm, and it was perpetrated by his neighbour, he would be entitled to take that neighbour to court, just as he would

if the neighbour sprayed a chemical next door that drifted onto his crop and damaged it. The evidence that we have, however, is that it is not really a problem that will arise in reality. The problem might arise if a farmer went to buy seed from his neighbour and the neighbour was careless and commingled different types of seed, falsely representing what he had to his neighbour. Clearly he has a case then, for false representation or whatever, but that applies just as validly to any type of grain being produced today.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Further to that, if it relates not to an actual contamination but to a loss of markets because the grain is no longer grown in a GM-free zone, how might growers feel about that?

Mr Bradley: That is extending the principle of responsibility until it becomes meaningless. It would be impossible to operate any business under that principle.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I am not necessarily asking about the grower's responsibility, but rather the general problem of people's desire to access different markets, and their ability to access those based on the GM or non-GM status of the area in which they are growing.

Mr Bradley: Under a reasonably practical coexistence regime, which is nothing more than an extension of current farm practices, those problems will not arise. They are imaginary problems.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Following on from your statement about farm practices, and the segregation required within that, a non-GM farmer who wants to continue to access non-GM markets now must certify the product, and has a compliance cost associated with that. Some farmers are incurring extra costs while not acquiring the benefit of growing a GM product.

Mr Bradley: As a principle, I can respond to that. Candlestick makers would have had huge costs imposed upon them with the introduction of electricity, to the extent that today they are right out of business, but they never had a veto over the introduction of electricity. Farmers should not have a veto over any innovation. What you are arguing is a case for the maintenance of the status quo. No sensible policy can be designed around maintaining the status quo.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I am simply testing the argument. Thank you.

Hon KATE DOUST: I am not sure if you can provide this information. I was curious about what additional costs would be incurred by a farmer in moving from non-GM to GM crops? What estimated extra costs would there be in relation to licences and stock?

Mr Bradley: We have quite a bit of data about the experience of farmers in Canada and the United States. You would be aware that more than 5.5 million farmers across the world, in 13 countries, are now growing GM crops. The survival of every one of them depends on their making accurate calculations about costs and risks. It is the most rapidly adopted technology that has ever been taken up by farmers at any time. This applies to Roundup Ready canola and Liberty Link Canola. I can give you the spray regime for the TT canola, which is currently being grown. First of all, you would probably spray that with Roundup to knock down the weeds, and then put two to four litres of atrazine-semazine to stop the weeds that subsequently germinate. You may have to go back and spray with an expensive grass selective herbicide, such as Select.

The CHAIRMAN: Can I just clarify that you are talking about current practices and not the procedure with GM canola?

Mr Bradley: Yes, I am. Then, you have to put up with a miserable yield because the TT gene also suppresses the yield of the variety it has been bred into. If you go for Roundup Ready, first of all you suffer no yield suppression, and you have one application of Roundup, which is the cheapest, safest herbicide available to man. I would say that people will take it up because costs are cheaper. More importantly, they will be taking it up because it improves their profitability and improves their rotations.

Hon KATE DOUST: It would be useful if we were able to have a look at the difference between the costings of conventional and GM crops.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you saying that the PGA has not done those figures for Western Australia? Basically, have you assumed, because of the adoption of those practices elsewhere, that the economics stack up, although you have not done any costing scenarios for GM and non-GM for Western Australia?

Mr Capp: We were able to look at some trials in August 2000, near York. That was the last time trials of Roundup Ready canola were done in Western Australia, so the data generated through the trial process by agronomists provided information on the possible benefits to our cropping system. That is one way of getting some of the information.

Mr Bradley: It is unfortunate that we have missed out on the opportunity to trial this technology in recent years. We lack that information. Secondly, it is not the role of the PGA to tell our farmer members what variety they will grow or what method they will use. If the technology is available, it is up to them to make a commercial decision about whether they should be using it.

The CHAIRMAN: So farmers have not come to you for information about likely costs, liability issues and so on? Your members have not sought any advice from you?

Mr Bradley: I would not say so specifically, because it is only a theoretical possibility at he moment.

Mr Capp: They would find other people better qualified to provide that financial data, such as the agronomists doing the work, farm advisers, and the chemical companies that have to try and justify what they are saying through the trial work they have done.

[10.45 am]

The CHAIRMAN: If this committee were to report on some of that, would it be of some use, for example, if we were able to ascertain some of that information. Would that provide a public service?

Mr Bradley: It would not do any harm. The problem is that costs are not fixed; they must be discovered.

The CHAIRMAN: Of course not; that is the case with all forecasting. I am referring to information within the limits of the methodology.

Mr Bradley: I am sure the work has been done. Monsanto would have put a fair amount of effort into that. Essentially, when Monsanto is selling Roundup Ready canola plus the Roundup it will need to know what charges the market will bear, so you can be sure it will have done a fair amount of work on how much it can afford to charge for its technology.

The CHAIRMAN: It has been suggested to us that, of all the potential GM crops, canola is the most difficult to start with because of issues of cross-pollination and the fact that the seed is easily lost or mixed during transport. Do you agree with that?

Mr Bradley: I think Monsanto started with canola because it is the easiest plant to work with. Like everything else in human endeavour, we do not start off with the full book. We must crawl before we walk and start where it is easiest.

The CHAIRMAN: In what sense do you mean easiest?

Mr Bradley: Canola is the easiest plant to breed and to introduce new traits to. Triazine tolerance was induced into canola by standard breeding techniques.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you agree that the risks of contamination and cross-pollination are high with canola compared with other potential GM crops?

Mr Bradley: While we all know that canola is a bigger outcrosser than cereals, the trial work done here, which is quite extensive and has been replicated in many other places in the world - we have copies of that - shows, as we indicated earlier, that it is not really a serious problem; it is a manageable problem.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you referring to Mary Rieger's work or the work of others?

Mr Capp: Among others, yes.

Mr Bradley: Work has been done in other places.

The CHAIRMAN: Can you give us the reference please?

Mr Capp: I have read some papers written by Dr Phil Salisbury, whom I met last week. He refers to many of the perceived problems and areas of pollen flow. He points out why some are minor problems and are manageable within our cropping landscape.

The CHAIRMAN: The committee is specifically looking at the Gene Technology Bill. Have you read it and do you have any recommendations to this committee regarding the regulatory system in it? Do you think it is over the top, has too much regulation or some areas are omitted that should be covered? What advice can you offer us?

Mr Bradley: We understand that it complements the commonwealth Act. We would not like to see any additional layers of regulatory oversight that inhibit the uptake of the technology or make it more expensive to adopt. From our reading of the legislation, we have not been able to work out whether it does that. Things like GM zones are impractical. The issue is better handled through coexistence policy, crop management protocols and so forth.

Mr Capp: I echo Leon's comments. I understand the Bill mirrors the federal Act. The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator provides comprehensive coverage of all the different angles to protect human health and the environment regarding the release of GMOs into the environment. We recommend that the committee recommend to the Legislative Council that it pass the state Bills as soon as possible.

Mr Bradley: I can think of ways to improve the commonwealth Act. It involves plant breeders in massive expense that would crush any conventional plant breeding technology. It would not be possible to breed a conventional variety given the costs involved in complying with the commonwealth Act. A consequence of this is that - something we would all deplore - local, small-scale breeders who could improve our current varieties and adapt them to specific Western Australian conditions are precluded from participating because they cannot wear the overheads. For example, as I discussed earlier, lupins are a very beneficial crop in rotation. They are also a liability because they have many deficiencies that make them less attractive than they otherwise would be. I do not think any multinational would spend hundreds of millions of dollars or $10 million to satisfy the Commonwealth's requirements to improve a crop the total production of which is about one million tonnes, most of which comes from Western Australia. We have concerns with the commonwealth Act because to comply with it is prohibitively expensive.

Hon KATE DOUST: Obviously the Pastoralists and Graziers Association is very keen for this Bill to be passed expeditiously. What level of support is there in the farming community - it appears to me that it is a divisive issue - for GMO crops to be established in this State and to be grown by our farmers? I am looking for a ballpark percentage.

Mr Bradley: I cannot give any response with authority. However, it is a contentious issue. Every innovation is a challenge to the established way of doing things. If we want progress in agriculture in Western Australia where essentially we must be commercial, we cannot give a veto over the new methods to the people who want the status quo.

Hon KATE DOUST: I thought you might have some idea on the basis that before your organisation put this position, you would have run forums, surveyed your members or got some feedback.

Mr Bradley: Recently I attended a branch meeting at Munglinup where some of our big canola growers were very concerned about the GMO issue. It would be fair to say that, after a robust discussion, the growers all agreed that, whatever the commercial implications, the trial works must proceed and farmers must have access to results of trials conducted within Western Australia to see for themselves what can happen.

The CHAIRMAN: Are you referring to trials rather than commercial release?

Mr Bradley: I am saying that prohibition on commercial release has also stymied the trial effort. It is a chicken and egg situation. We must have the trials before people can assess commercial prospects. The first step must be to allow the trial work to proceed unimpeded and for farmers to be allowed to assess it for themselves. Almost all our members support ongoing research and trial work. Whether they wish to take up the technology is something we do not know. We will not see that until they reveal their preferences by what they do.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: I read the PGA submission. Obviously the PGA is fully familiar with the federal Bill. The recommendation is that the Gene Technology Bill be complementary to the federal Act and be passed immediately without amendments. Are you happy that the federal Government has it 100 per cent right?

Mr Bradley: As I said earlier, no, we are not; it is too onerous.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: That statement is not quite right then?

Mr Bradley: I should get Damien to answer that. Damien did that in the context of the prospect of GM-free zones being the only amendment that the Parliament was thinking of. We believe that the whole idea of GM-free zones is to stop the uptake of the technology and that amendment should not be supported.

Hon FRANK HOUGH: Can you add to that Damien?

Mr Capp: That conclusion or recommendation was written on the basis that the federal Act is here to stay and the state Parliament cannot roll back the provisions of the federal Act.

Hon JIM SCOTT: You said that the PGA has a considerable number of grain growers within its membership. How many does it have?

Mr Bradley: I thought you might ask that question. The grain producer membership is 1 958. Their establishments range from those that produce 50 000 tonnes to 500 tonnes as a complement to their livestock enterprise.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Does the PGA invest in seed technology?

Mr Bradley: No. It is strictly a representative, political lobby group.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I remember reading that the National Farmers Federation had formed partnerships with some companies.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the PGA passed a policy position on the introduction of GM crops that has been canvassed through your membership?

Mr Bradley: I do not know if you know how policy is formed at the PGA. It has various committees, of which the Western Grain Growers is one. It has an executive on which sit people from all over the State who represent the various district committees, as well as the chairman and vice-chairman of the commodity committees. The committees develop a policy and that goes up to the executive for everybody to consider. Once it is approved by the executive it becomes policy, and our policy is to support the trial and commercial application of biotechnology.

The CHAIRMAN: Presumably that is a written policy statement.

Mr Bradley: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Will you please provide that to the committee so that we have a clear indication of it. Thank you very much for your attendance.