

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2015

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (POPPY CULTIVATION) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I know that this bill has been presented by Hon. David Ridgway in the other place, and I note his excellent work in regard to this bill in giving more opportunity to our South Australian farmers.

In relation to this Controlled Substances (Poppy Cultivation) Amendment Bill 2015, poppy farming trials began in 1964 in Australia in Tasmania. Commercial production began in 1970 and that was in Tasmania. It was also legalised in Victoria in 2013 and most recently in the Northern Territory in 2014.

At present, Australia accounts for 80 per cent of the world's legal poppy production, and Tasmania is the world's largest producer of legal opium poppy. The industry is worth \$290 million annually to Tasmania and accounts for 8 per cent of Tasmania's primary industries. Currently, there are 1,000 farmers contracted to grow poppies. Over 30,000 hectares of poppies are grown each year, and opiate production has increased by 124 per cent in the last five years.

It is expected in Victoria that the industry will be a \$100 million industry within a decade. This means that Victoria has already had 1,000 hectares of poppies produced there and this is estimated to increase to 4,000 hectares by the next season.

There are extremely strict laws in regard to farming poppies, and in Tasmania only three companies have an approved licence issued by the government to cultivate opium poppies; and, upon being approved for a licence, companies have contracted farmers. I would also like to note the signs which are placed on the fences of poppy farms, which read 'keep out, trespassers prosecuted, illegal use of crop may cause death'.

In regard to some of the requirements, in Tasmania the perimeter of the place growing the poppy must be securely fenced in accordance to the Boundary Fences Act 1908, with minimum requirements of a five-wire fence topped with barbed wire or four plain wires with the top one to be electrified and properly fitted gates and panels, with panels of seven wires or ring-lock.

As I indicated, warning notices must be placed and, within seven days of harvesting the poppies, farmers must ensure any material remaining where the crop was growing is destroyed. Failure to pursue this could result in the non-renewal of licensing. The chief executive officer of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia, as read in the bill, has the authority to authorise persons to be inspectors. All inspectors must be provided with an identification certificate, unless they are a police officer. The inspectors have the authority to

inspect, count, examine and many other things as regulated, as stated in the bill.

With the ageing of the world's population, the use of drugs like Nurofen Plus, Panadol Osteo and Panadeine has more than tripled in the last 20 years, and Tasmania has become the world's largest legal supplier of opiates to the world over 50 years. Our state certainly needs the opportunity that poppy farming presents to our farmers. I know this may only present to possibly several hundred farmers at the most, but I think we need to find all the niches we can in the current situation with the economy and with the state of the agricultural economy as it is.

I commend the Hon. David Ridgway for the work he has done on this bill and for the agreement of the government in regard to this bill. Sometimes we can make real things happen and, when things like this happen for the regions, it makes me feel excited about agriculture once again. With those few words, I commend the bill, I commend the work of everyone involved and I commend the coming together of people in this house to get this through so that we can all enjoy our Panadol Osteo into the future.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:38): I thank the government for its support and I thank the member for Newland for his comments. As I said earlier, it shows that we can make some real change in this place when we all come together on what I believe are very serious matters that we need to deal with, especially with the regions in mind and our agriculture sector, which has suffered early cut-offs to its season the last two seasons. I believe in giving our farmers all the opportunity we can. As I said earlier, I thank everyone for their support on this debate and hope it speeds quickly through the house, because it has already come down from the other place.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:39): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and passed.