

PETROLEUM (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT BILL

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PROPERTY OFFENCES) BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 5 February 2009. Page 1448.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:39): I rise to support the bill. I applaud the heavy penalties that can be meted out, especially as people like myself, who live in a regional area, have witnessed the carnage of bushfires, whether deliberately lit or, as is often the case, lit by lightning. Either way, it can cause a vast amount of damage. If a bushfire is ignited by a lightning strike, that is a part of nature, and that is how this country has been for hundreds of years—areas get burned. However, vandals who light up property, fencing and buildings deserve the highest penalty applicable.

It is distressing to see the damage that thrillseekers do when they light up brush fences, which are very popular for a lot of people not just in the city, but in some regional towns and cities as well. Through thrillseeking, they light up a fence. Brush is not something that is come by easily. A lot of it is harvested from my electorate out in the Mallee. It is a resource that we have to keep sustainable. We have to have a good deterrent, and this bill has that. It has fines and penalties of up to 10 years in gaol to stop people doing these terrible acts.

I will talk about another thing that happens in rural areas. We have seen it in Freeling in recent years, where someone's haysheds have been deliberately lit on several occasions. Hay fires are some of the worst fires to fight, because you cannot really put them out. You just have to pull the stack apart, whether it is in a shed or outside a shed. It ties up CFS and MFS personnel and other volunteers and landowners for days, if not weeks, tackling the blaze, and a major use of resources is needed. Not to lessen the amount of financial and feed damage for the person involved, a lot of these fires happen in major export sheds, which has ramifications right along the way. I certainly support the bill along with the others on this side of the house and hope for its speedy progress.