SHEARERS ACCOMMODATION BILL 1975

House of Assembly, 26 February 1975, page 2577

Second reading

**The Hon. D. H. McKEE (Minister of Labour and Industry)** obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to make provision for the proper accommodation of shearers; to repeal the Shearers Accommodation Act, 1922-1967; and for other purposes. Read a first time.

The Hon. D. H. McKEE: I move:

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in Hansard without my reading it. Leave granted.

Explanation of Bill

The minimum standards of shearers’ accommodation have not been reviewed since 1967. Changes in conditions since then and improvements in the standards required by law in other States indicate the need for the determination of new standards that are now appropriate. The legislation which is currently in operation was first passed in 1922 and has been the subject of five subsequent amendments. Although it is not a long Act, it has become quite unwieldy with some of the amendments virtually as long as the original Act itself. To compound the problem, we have a situation where some of the conditions of accommodation are set out in detail in the Act while others are contained in regulations. There is no logical reason for this and the net effect of all these factors is to make the present Shearers Accommodation Act cumbersome and difficult to follow: in fact it resembles a patchwork quilt because of the many amendments.

Since April, 1972, a full-time inspector of shearer’s accommodation has been employed to make regular inspections of sheep stations throughout the State. With the appointment of the first full-time inspector a systematic programme of inspections has been undertaken. This has revealed the necessity for there to be a complete revision of the requirements laid down by the legislation. Clearly the details of the type of accommodation required are more appropriate for prescription by regulation, so this new Act has been drafted as an enabling Act that authorises the prescription of details of accommodation to be made by regulation. I hope that the regulations will provide both station owners and managers with a clear idea of the amenities which will be required of them in the future.

Clauses 1 to 5 are formal. Clause 6 limits the applicability of this Bill to situations where there is no alternative accommodation available and where four or more shearers are accommodated at the same time. In certain circumstances, the Minister is empowered to dispense with the requirements of the legislation. Clause 7 deals with the appointment of inspectors which include certain members of the Police Force. Clause 8 refers to the inspection of buildings used for accommodation and includes a penalty for obstructing an inspector. Clause 9 sets out the inspector’s obligation to give notice to the manager or owner of any property that the accommodation provided is unsatisfactory, and he can require that this be rectified within 12 months. Any such notice must be specific so as to leave the employer with no doubt as to his obligation. Clause 10 requires that offences under the Act be dealt with by magistrates or justices of the peace. Clause 11 empowers the making of regulations under the proposed Act. They are broadly expressed and all the substantive requirements of amenities and accommodation will be made under this clause.

Mr. CHAPMAN secured the adjournment of the debate.