**WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1954**

**Legislative Assembly, 12 August 1954, pages 375-6**

Second reading

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Wild Dogs Act, 1931-53. Read a first time.

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The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In 1951 section 6a of the Wild Dogs Act was enacted to provide that the Minister could, in each of the calendar years 1952, 1953 and 1954, expend up to £2,000 in the carrying out of aerial baiting for wild dogs. This amount is to be provided out of the rates levied under the Act. The section provides that the Minister may seek the advice of the Dog Fence Board as to the best means of carrying out this aerial baiting. The Dog Fence Board has reported that due to nomadic habits of dingoes and the varying seasons which cause fluctuations in the number of tails and scalps from baited areas presented for bonus payments it is somewhat difficult to assess the true value of aerial baiting. However, results in Queensland and Western Australia, where aerial baiting has been conducted over a longer period, indicate that reduced numbers of tails and scalps have been received from treated areas. A similar reduction has occurred in South Australia. The board accordingly recommends that aerial baiting be carried out in future years and accordingly it is proposed by the Bill to repeal the time limitation now included in section 6a. The effect will be that aerial baiting may be carried on in any year subject to the limitation that up to £2,000 only may be expended for this purpose in any year.

Although section 6a authorizes the Minister to expend money for the purposes of aerial baiting the point has been raised whether the powers of the Minister are sufficiently wide to authorize him to cause this aerial baiting to be carried out. The Crown Solicitor has advised that section 138 of the Pastoral Act would probably be construed as giving the Minister the requisite power but has suggested that, in order to remove any doubts on the matter, it would be advisable to amend the law and to provide specific power for the purpose. Paragraph (b) of clause 2 accordingly expressly authorizes the Minister to cause this aerial baiting to be carried out. The effect of the clause is that this baiting may be carried out on pastoral lands, Crown lands, and reserved lands. The clause also provides that section 38 of the Vermin Act is not to apply to these operations. This section provides that where the Minister lays poison baits, notice must be displayed on the land. Obviously this provision did not contemplate aerial baiting and should not apply to aerial baiting. As has been pointed out by the Grown Solicitor, a general power of this kind proposed would not be construed to extend to the performance of acts dangerous to humans or stock, and, as a consequence, it is incumbent on the Minister, in carrying out aerial baiting, to see that care is used in selecting the places where the baits are dropped so that they will not be dropped near domestic water supplies or in circumstances that could endanger human lives or stock. Notice of the intended dropping of baits will be given wherever possible.

Records show that in the years when baits were dropped (1952 and 1953) 10,784 and6834scalps respectively were presented for payment, as against 5,715 and 6,667 respectively in 1950 and 1951. These figures cannot, however, be taken either to prove or disprove the efficacy of aerial baiting as the incidence of dogs in any particular year must be taken into account and also the fact that breeding country more or less inaccessible to humans for collecting the scalps can be baited from the air. The dog population is by no means static from year to year, but fluctuates very greatly according to seasonal conditions.

Mr. RICHES secured the adjournment of the debate.