

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

Thursday, September 24, 1964.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. L. H. Densley) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

**ASSENT TO BILLS.**

His Excellency the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the following Bills:

Apiaries Act Amendment,  
Public Finance Act Amendment,  
Statutes Amendment (Dog Fence and Vermin),  
Supply (No. 2),  
Weights and Measures Act Amendment,  
Wheat Industry Stabilization Act Amendment.

**QUESTIONS.****SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS.**

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD: From time to time in the last few years statements have been made, some of which we know have been correct, that small country towns have experienced difficulty in securing resident medical practitioners. Last weekend an article appeared in the *Sunday Mail* stating that locums were difficult to get. I have been requested by some of the people I represent to ask the Minister of Health whether, in view of the shortage of medical practitioners in small country towns, the Government has considered, and if it has not whether it will consider, investigating the possibility of forming an aerial medical team from which medical practitioners can be sent to these country towns at short notice when needed. Will the Minister reply?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN: The shortage of general practitioners, particularly in the country, has been given much consideration both by me and by the officers of my department. The Australian Medical Association is at the moment giving the matter some attention because in recent years the emphasis in teaching has been, I think, on specialized rather than general medicine. Consequently, we now have a dearth of general practitioners. There has been an improvement in enrolments of medical students at the university and it is expected that, I think as early as next year, there will be a greater number of students. With the encouragement that has been given by the Association of General Practitioners—a general practitioners' branch of the College of Surgeons and Physicians—more emphasis has

been placed on the work, value and necessity of general practitioners. The shortage of locums is due to the fact that sufficient general practitioners are not available; therefore, the creation of a pool is outside the bounds of practical administration.

So far as emergency work in the country is concerned—and I wonder whether this may have been confused with what the honourable member is really after—within the association a team of doctors has been arranged to do specialized work in urgent cases. The practitioners can go out and perform operations or give medical treatment. However, I do not think circumstances at the moment would attract a pool to call on, if that is what the honourable member means, to go out and act as locums. I do not think a pool is available. It is a part of a medical practitioner's attitude to his calling that he does not want to be sitting down waiting for work, anyway. The whole essence of his keeping up to date is that he must be active at his work. While there is a shortage of such medical men, I do not think there is much opportunity of promoting what the honourable member suggests, particularly as we are not in a police State and cannot direct people where to go. This problem relates not only to medical practitioners but to nurses also.

**HACKHAM CROSSING.**

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I ask leave to make a statement prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I noticed in this morning's newspaper a paragraph stating that tenders had been called for the purpose of ironing out a bend at Pedlar Creek, which is situated between Noarlunga and Aldinga. Before reaching Pedlar Creek from Adelaide the road bifurcates just beyond the horseshoe bend at Noarlunga. A small amount of the traffic goes straight on to Pedlar Creek but most of it turns to the left and goes down to places such as McLaren Vale, Willunga and Victor Harbor. Before reaching this point, and quite a bit closer to Adelaide on the same South Road, there is a small town called Hackham, where a corner of a similar nature to that at Pedlar Creek needs ironing out. It carries all the traffic going south and not just a small portion of the South Road traffic. I had expected that this might have had priority over the other crossing. Has the Minister of Roads given this matter his attention and as he has seen fit to attend to the Pedlar Creek crossing will he now devote his attention to the Hackham crossing?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: I am fully acquainted with this problem. The answer with regard to the Pedlar Creek crossing is that the bridge is in a bad state of repair and whilst we are awaiting the report of the Transport Control Board regarding the closing or otherwise of the railway service to Willunga it was considered necessary that a bridge must be constructed forthwith. As far as the Hackham crossing is concerned, the Highways Department estimates that an overpass on the railway line at Hackham would cost at least £250,000, and that would be more than the State could afford at the moment. There is a long downhill run there, and probably we shall have to erect permanent crossing gates if the Railways Department continues to use the line in the next few years. Plans are being designed for such a crossing. There is only one train a week on the line and gates may have to be installed.

The Hon Sir ARTHUR RYMILL: I have never suggested an overpass. Will the Minister consider alternatives to an overpass?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE: I thought I made it clear that at present an overpass is not being considered because it would cost far too much.

#### ROAD TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (TYRES).

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

Second reading.

The Hon. C. R. STORY (Midland): I move:  
*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

It deals with that portion of the Road Traffic Act that is related to safety provisions. Members will recall that that matter has been discussed frequently in both Houses. The purpose of the Bill is to prohibit the practice of regrooving smooth motor tyres. Clause 3 says that a person shall not offer for sale or for hire a motor vehicle which has been fitted with a tyre of four-ply rating that has been regrooved. The practice of using such tyres is dangerous. In fact, it is fraudulent, in that a tyre can be worn to a smooth condition and the pattern removed and then regrooved to make it appear to have a considerable life. Often the cord of the tyre is cut through, and it is dangerous to have a vehicle on the road with such a tyre. Some of the tyres do not get cut right down to the cord. They would still have from 250 to 500 miles of road life, but they could blow out before that. Several instances have been brought to my

notice where that has happened. This Bill was introduced as a private measure in another place and has now come to this place for consideration. I commend it to members and sincerely hope that they will support it.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### BOOK PURCHASERS PROTECTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

#### PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Health): I move:

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

It is designed to make two alterations in the Physiotherapists Act. Firstly, clause 3 inserts a new subsection in section 39a of the principal Act. Under section 39a persons whose qualifications have been obtained outside Australia but are not recognized as such here are required to undergo examinations locally before they may be registered in this State. The new subsection prescribes fees for these examinations: £16 16s. for the initial examination and £5 5s. for each subsequent examination. These fees have been recommended by the Physiotherapists Board in view of the estimated costs the board will incur in arranging the examinations and making investigations into overseas training conditions, etc. The board considers it fair that the costs of these examinations and incidental investigations should be borne by each applicant rather than that a general increase in fees be made on all physiotherapists to meet these costs.

Secondly, the amendment contained in clause 4 is designed to replace section 47a of the principal Act inserted by the amending Bill of last year. That section prohibits physiotherapists from administering drugs to their patients, but the Crown Solicitor has advised that the term "drug" in this context is uncertain in its meaning. This section is therefore repealed by clause 5 and replaced by new section 41a (inserted by clause 4) which prohibits physiotherapists from practising otherwise than by physiotherapy. The new section 41a has the same purpose as section 47a, but is drafted in general terms so as to avoid any ambiguity associated with the term "drug". The administration of drugs (as commonly interpreted) is not included in the term physiotherapy, as defined in the principal Act, so a registered physiotherapist who administered

drugs to his patients would be practising otherwise than by physiotherapy and would therefore commit an offence under new section 41a. The Bill has been referred to and approved by the Physiotherapists Board.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### MENTAL HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Minister of Health): I move:

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

The principal purpose of the Bill is to amend the Mental Health Act so as to make a clear distinction between patients who are mentally ill and those who are intellectually retarded. The Director of Mental Health has recommended that this distinction be made so as to bring our legislation into line with the modern concept of mental health. The distinction will also enable the mental health authorities to receive Commonwealth pensions and child endowments for intellectually retarded children.

Another purpose of the Bill is to provide a simple procedure for the admittance of intellectually retarded patients to the appropriate institutions. Clause 3 amends the long title to the principal Act by removing the reference to mentally defective persons and referring instead to persons who are mentally ill or intellectually retarded. Clause 4 amends section 4 of the principal Act so as to define clearly the two categories of mentally defective persons and to delete the references to "idiots" and "imbeciles", these terms now being considered unnecessary and out of keeping with the modern approach to the treatment of mentally defective persons. The clause also inserts a definition of "training centre" in section 4, a training centre being a place declared by proclamation to be a training centre for the intellectually retarded, and makes consequential alterations to other definitions. Clauses 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 make consequential amendments extending the application of the principal Act to training centres.

Clause 8 inserts new section 37b in the principal Act dealing with the admission of intellectually retarded persons to training centres. The new section prescribes formal requirements for admission, but patients may always be admitted informally pursuant to

section 137 of the principal Act, which is the normal case. Under the new section, any of the next of kin may apply for the admission of a person certified by a doctor to be intellectually retarded and to require specialized training at a training centre (subsection (1)). After admittance, the Superintendent or some other doctor must examine the patient (subsection (2)) and, if of opinion that he would not benefit from training at the centre, must discharge the patient (subsection (3)). A further examination must be held within 21 days and, if so indicated, the patient must be discharged (subsection (4)).

Clause 13(a) amends section 98 of the principal Act dealing with the powers of the Public Trustee to manage the estates of patients. The institutions referred to in paragraph (c) thereof have been renamed and the clause makes the appropriate changes to the wording of that paragraph. Clause 13(b) makes a further amendment of section 98 consequential on new section 37b. Clause 14 makes an amendment to section 164 of the principal Act dealing with references in other Acts to mentally defective persons, consequential upon the distinction now being made between persons who are mentally ill and intellectually retarded persons.

The Hon. A. F. KNEEBONE secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### BUILDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from September 23. Page 988.)

Clause 9—"Governor may make regulations."

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government): Since progress was reported yesterday I have discussed this clause with the Acting Chairman of the Building Act Advisory Committee, Mr. Veale, who has informed me that the Chairman, Mr. Cartledge, will be available to discuss it with me on Tuesday morning. In view of that I ask that the Committee again report progress.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

#### COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 2.58 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, September 29, at 2.15 p.m.