

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 25 July 2007

CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION (REASONABLE CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.
(Continued from 30 May. Page 198.)

The Hon. A.M. BRESSINGTON: I am a little bemused about the need to introduce a bill to give parents permission to smack their children, but I am also very much aware of why the Hon. Dennis Hood introduced this bill: basically to secure the right parents have to use reasonable chastisement with their children without fear of prosecution. Although I know it has been said that there is no risk of legislation similar to that of New Zealand being introduced in South Australia, I guess the honourable member decided that he had to play it safe just in case.

As with the piercing and scarification bill, this is no more than a matter of reaffirming parents' rights, and that is why I support this bill, even though I believe that the Hon. Dennis Hood also thought it was a somewhat funny bill to introduce. There is a need, I guess, to assert that parents still have rights to raise their children and discipline them in a reasonable manner, as has been done for centuries.

It does seem to be a bit of a trend—not so much here but overseas—that parental rights are being stripped away and are becoming a matter of legislation. I guess this is a case of governments over-reacting to the prevalence of child abuse in society at the moment; we tend to swing like a pendulum and either underdo or overdo some things. It seems to be very difficult to find actions, legislation and policies that will meet in the middle and create the balance we are all looking for when we introduce legislation around child protection.

I support the bill, although I think it is a shame that there seems to be a need to legislate for such things. As I said, I can appreciate the reason—that it is, basically, to head off any legislation that may be drawn up in the future that is similar to New Zealand's. Again, I look forward to the debate.

The Hon. I.K. HUNTER secured the adjournment of the debate.