

an Act which stated that magistrates can now be removed or disciplined only by the Governor in Council after a hearing has been conducted in the Supreme Court.

Secondly, in my most recent set of amendments, my power to deal with magistrates in relation to where they sit or what classes of case they hear has been removed. I have conferred a greater measure of judicial independence on the magistracy than has hitherto existed in Victoria or any other State in Australia.

I welcome the opportunity of being able to provide that explanation on the Victorian position. It is a matter to which I adhere and the discussions which take place regularly between me and the judges and magistrates are harmonious.

The partnership arrangement we have for better judicial administration is now embodied in the Courts Advisory Council. I am happy to report that the Chief Justice, Chief Judge and Chief Magistrate hold regular meetings between themselves for administration purposes, but there has been no suggestion from any quarter that any of those matters relate to discipline and certainly not to dismissal, removal or suspension in any form.

### EGG INDUSTRY REPORT

**The Hon. B. P. DUNN** (North Western Province)—I address my question to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs relating to the egg industry in Victoria and the decision of the Government to reduce the price of eggs following a report of a committee chaired by Professor Fels.

**The Hon. M. A. Birrell**—Hear! Hear!

**The Hon. B. P. DUNN**—I do not know whether some of Mr Birrell's colleagues would agree with his interjection in support of the recommendation of Professor Fels.

Is the Minister aware that the report of Professor Fels on the egg industry is based on the establishment of a model that did not accurately reflect the average egg producer's situation in Victoria?

Is it the Government's intention to further reduce egg prices in keeping with the recommendations of Professor Fels, and will the Government reaffirm its commitment to the industry stabilization provisions in Victoria or does it propose to further destabilize this industry by withdrawing legislation that really provides for the stabilization that is in place at present?

**The Hon. E. H. WALKER** (Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs)—I am aware that some sections of the egg producing industry challenge some portions of Professor Fels's report. I was aware of that at the time the report was brought to my attention. After investigation of those concerns, I do not believe they are substantial. The move made by the Victorian Egg Marketing Board to reduce the price of all grades of eggs by 12 cents a dozen was a well-made decision and had my full support. Honourable members would understand that I do not determine this matter, but I made it quite clear to the board that I was in favour of following the first recommendation of the Fels report.

Sections of the industry dispute that, but I do not accept that their reasons—at least the reasons posed to me—are substantial. It should be understood by honourable members that the report indicated that there was profitability within the industry in Victoria to a far greater degree than the 12 cents reduction. The report mentioned somewhere between 20 cents and 30 cents a dozen overpricing in Victoria.

Therefore, in response to the second question, I have not committed the Government—nor could I—to the second and third steps of that report. However, I certainly would not resile or withdraw from the possibility of further reduction in due course. I do not believe the egg board has made its decision on that matter either.

Will the matter go further? I cannot assure honourable members of that but, the report suggests further reductions at a later date.

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Will I reaffirm my commitment to the industry stabilization provisions? Orderly marketing has occurred in recent years to a degree in the egg industry that is beyond that of any other agricultural product in this State. That is not to say that it was not necessary and I give some credit to the board for having stabilized the industry in recent years in terms of determining the matter of supply and demand and keeping those within 2 per cent of each other. That has withdrawn a number of the problems of years ago.

Nevertheless, as Professor Fels suggests in his report, some difficulties arise if the one body controls quotas, production of eggs and pricing. I am conscious of that and I indicate that a reference has been made, along with reference to other marketing boards, to the Public Bodies Review Committee.

That committee is dealing with the egg board now. I expect to be advised by that committee early next year about its report on the egg board. I shall take proper notice of that committee's suggestions.

Beyond that, I have no intention of interfering with or intervening in the orderly marketing procedures that currently apply. However, I cannot commit myself to that position beyond the report of the Public Bodies Review Committee because I shall be taking that report seriously.

### SELF-MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS

**The Hon. M. J. SANDON** (Chelsea Province)—Can the Minister for Health inform the House of the steps the Government is taking to increase the autonomy and capacity for self-management of public hospitals?

**The Hon. D. R. WHITE** (Minister for Health)—It is true to say that over a long period there has been an inadequate relationship between the Health Department and our major public hospitals.

The nature and extent of that relationship is that each year the department provides a sum of money and, in return, the hospitals employ some effective full-time staff.

As I have said continually over the past eighteen months, that does not auger well for effective accountability to the Parliament of what hospitals are doing. Moreover, underlying the relationship is evidence of excessive interference in a day-to-day sense by the department in the affairs of our public hospitals.

That interference means that people who are appointed to hospital boards and people who are appointed in turn by those boards as chief executive officers do not have adequate autonomy and do not have adequate capacity to take initiatives in the running of the hospitals. Moreover, whenever a public hospital generates a surplus, it is not in a position to retain any part of that surplus. To that end, the Government has taken steps via what we term a hospital agreement project.

The hospital agreement project, which currently involves four hospitals—the Bendigo and Northern District Base Hospital, the Western General Hospital, the Austin Hospital and the Wangaratta District Base Hospital—involves a process where the hospitals themselves have been encouraged to initiate hospital agreements. With respect to Wangaratta, I am pleased to say that a two-day seminar occurred at Mansfield involving eighteen staff, which included representatives from all sections of the nursing profession and other hospital employees in designing the hospital agreement. I was in the fortunate position of being a witness to the signature of the regional director of nursing to the signing of the first hospital agreement in this State by the late Bernard Leonard in conjunction with David Evans's brother, who is the chairman of the Wangaratta District Base Hospital.

Further hospital agreements will be signed in the near future at the Western General Hospital, the Austin Hospital and the Bendigo and Northern District Base Hospital.



Read 13/10/86

*With the Compliments of*

*The Hon. Dennis Lee M. L. C.*

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
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For your information