

THE LAW

EMPLOYMENT

## Push for public service diversity

More people with a disability and from non-English speaking backgrounds would have to be employed by the Australian Public Service (APS) under a new proposal by the Australian Greens.

Greens Deputy Adam Bandt has introduced the Public Service Amendment (Employment for all of us) Bill 2014 into the House of Representatives.

The bill requires the APS to double the number of employees from each group within five years and leaves it up to the Public Service Commissioner to decide how that will be achieved.

Mr Bandt said there is significant unemployment and under-employment from both groups that needs to be addressed.

“We know that almost 20 per cent of Australians identify as having a disability but the number of people with a disability employed by the APS dropped to 2.9 per cent of the entire workforce in 2012,” he said.

“Similarly, one in four people in Australia identify as being from a non-English speaking background but account for only 5.1 per cent of the Australian workforce.”

Mr Bandt told the House that Australia runs the risk of creating an underclass of people who will be locked out of the workforce.

“It will not solve the problem, but it will be a significant step towards moving people who want employment into that gainful employment,” he said.

The bill is yet to be debated further. ■



AGRICULTURE

## Reforms target farm chemicals



 CROPPED: Licence changes cut red tape

Changes aimed at simplifying the system which regulates thousands of chemicals and medicines used in primary industries have passed federal parliament.

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014 was introduced to the House by Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce.

“This bill aims to reduce the unnecessary regulatory burden on this industry resulting in reduced costs that will eventually flow on to benefit primary producers,” he said.

Around 11,700 separate agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines are registered with the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

A key part of the bill is an amendment to change the re-registration and renewal requirements of chemicals.

“In the same way a person obtains a car driver’s licence that then is subject to periodic renewal, under the new legislation ‘agvet’ chemical registrations continue in force subject to periodic renewal,” Mr Joyce said.

“These amendments will allow longer timeframes for renewal. The regulations will set the period which could be up to seven years. Less frequent renewals will mean less red tape and less cost to business.

“These reforms aim to reduce red tape for farmers and other businesses and encourage the development of new chemistry with a range of benefits for farmers and other users, the environment and the community.”

Opposition agricultural spokesman Joel Fitzgibbon said the bill was extremely important.

“It will affect Australia’s multibillion-dollar plant sites and crop protection industry; it will have implications for our natural environment; and, most importantly, it is about the protection of human health,” he said.

“These are all very important points but for the opposition the last point — that is, human health — is paramount.”

Australia’s agriculture sector is worth around \$48 billion. ■