

PANKAJ OSWAL — YARA INTERNATIONAL ASA

Statement

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [9.34 pm]: I rise tonight with a statement that is a little tongue-in-cheek. Before I make my comments, I wish to point out that many of my friends are, indeed, vegetarians and vegans. I wish to talk about a gentleman in another country by the name of Mr Rajan Zed, who has argued that Australia seems to be lacking in human rights culture, and that it needs to do a lot more to become a fully civilised society and stay competitive globally. He says that Australia still does not have a charter of human rights and that its human rights framework needs urgent reform. He said that Australia had not directly incorporated into law the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Mr Zed made these observations after having called on the Australian Human Rights Commission and its president, Catherine Branson, QC, to immediately intervene and restore the human rights of Pankaj Oswal.

Where does this all come from? This comes from the fact that Mr Oswal was concerned about Australian workers eating meat while working on his property. Mr Zed said that Australia needs to have a deep, introspective look at its heart and be kind to immigrants, minorities, Indigenous people and other vulnerable groups. He said that in addition to the various Christian denominations, Australia now had a considerable number of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs and followers of traditional Aboriginal religions. He also said that we should respect our Indigenous culture.

I now wish to turn to some of the activities of Mr Oswal, the man Mr Zed is defending. Mr Oswal and Yara International ASA want to develop an explosives plant in the middle of Australia's greatest examples of petroglyphs, dating back some 30 000 years—well before the last ice maxim. I believe that the area Mr Oswal has chosen for his explosives plant shows scant regard for Australia's Indigenous culture and the world's prehistory. The company has not conducted any consultative heritage surveys in the area and includes only incomplete data in the documents it produces. It is also noted, in response to a parliamentary question, that Burrup Holdings Ltd and Yara International ASA have already failed to comply with the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. I sought through my question to determine whether the proponents of the development of this explosives plant had sought to comply with the requirements to lodge a section 18 request in respect of registered Aboriginal sites that could potentially be impacted by any drilling programs. The question identified that if these two companies were to proceed with their drilling program they would risk prosecution, because they have not referred the matter.

I find it a bit rich that the international media is condemning us for being culturally inept and insensitive, when this gentleman does not respect our Indigenous culture; indeed the very culture that Mr Zed said, in a statement in Nevada, that the Oswals respected. I like my meat. I have no problems with vegans or vegetarians, but I believe it a bit rich when the international media calls on Australians to have a deep, introspective look at its heart and be kind to Indigenous people when Mr Oswal clearly does not.