AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms JR Howard MP (Chair)
Mr SA Bennett MP
Mrs J Gilbert MP
Mr EJ Sorensen MP

Staff present:

Mr R Hansen (Research Director)
Mrs M Johns (Principal Research Officer)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE EXHIBITED ANIMALS BILL 2015

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 27 APRIL 2015

Brisbane

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Committee met at 12.32 pm

CHAIR: We will move on now to the departmental briefing by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Welcome to the briefing today.

BELL, Mr Patrick, General Manager, Strategy and Legislation, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

CLARKE, Ms Marguerite, Acting Director, Regulatory Policy and Reform, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

CHAIR: Would you like to respond to any of the points you have heard from our witnesses?

Mr Bell: Thank very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee today. Certainly the department recognises the concerns that the participants in the committee's hearing today have expressed around management plans. We have noticed a consistent theme around the potential red tape and certainly concerns around the imposition this would have on the industry.

I confirm for the committee that a management plan really only needs to address the significant relevant risks and relevant adverse effects associated with exhibiting and dealing with an animal. This would mean that the management plan for some species, where there are few significant risks, such as the blue tongue lizard, which Mr Mucci mentioned this morning, could be extremely brief. However, a management plan for big cats, for example, would need to include quite substantial detail.

I would also like to indicate that a plan could be written for a group of species. Several different species of native finches, for example, kept in an aviary could be covered under a single plan. Large macropods, such as red or grey kangaroos, could also be covered in a single plan.

It has been suggested today that the burden of management plans would be substantially reduced if they did not apply to category A animals because thousands of Queenslanders keep these species recreationally and they are not required to develop a plan. While some category A animals can be kept recreationally in Queensland they do include some animals that can be extremely dangerous—for example, taipans. The management plan for a venomous category A taipan would need to be much more extensive because the public health and safety risks and the welfare issues are quite significant. But a management plan for, a spinifex hopping mouse, for example, would need to be quite modest by comparison. It goes back to the very specific risks of the animals involved.

The department will be consulting with the industry during the development of examples of management plans. As some of the participants today have indicated, some of that information is already at hand for their operations. Fixed exhibiters will have already prepared most of the information that would be required in a management plan when they submit an exhibit notice. Large demonstrators with employees are likely to have similar information because it is good practice to document those procedures. Some of the smaller exhibiters who are following existing codes of practice may be able to simply comply with the relevant codes of practice and cut and paste that information into their management plan. Others may wish to adopt part of the example plans that are developed by the department as we go forward.

We have also recognised the concerns about category C animals being based in fixed exhibits. Most exotic animals—amphibians and reptiles—will be category C animals under the bill because they are prohibited matter under the Biosecurity Act. There are very few other opportunities to keep these animals. They can be permitted to be kept for scientific research in limited circumstances, but otherwise they cannot be brought into this state. If they are found in this state they must be reported immediately. They cannot be dealt with unless there is a permit. That is consistent with either containment or eradication of that animal.

We have discussed a bit about fixed exhibits. The hierarchy of hazard control is a widely accepted system promoted by numerous safety organisations. The paramount one would be the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—an international organisation—CDC. But it is also promoted by Australian agencies such as SafeWork SA and WorkSafe Victoria.

The most reliable way to mitigate risks under that aforementioned hazard control hierarchy is through fixed enclosures. It is designed to isolate the risk from humans. It is a far more effective way than relying on procedures, policies, training, supervision and work practices. It is not to suggest that they do not have a place, but with high-risk animals the most effective way of managing those is to have them in fixed enclosures.

Allowing animals to be taken off exhibit for periods would increase those risks. It reduces the public oversight of what is happening. There would be plenty of examples where an exhibition of an animal may be inappropriate. For example, a newborn animal, a sick animal, an injured animal or a breeding animal would be appropriate to take off exhibit. That is why the bill has taken the moderate position of only requiring 900 hours each year per species.

The next part to that story is allowing animals to be taken off site also increases that risk. It introduces new risks such as misadventure during travel. There is also that greater reliance on administrative controls such as supervision and compliance with procedures and work practices. It is vulnerable to human factors and in particular unintentional or intentional noncompliance with those procedures and practices. However, there are some benefits in allowing off-site display. That is why the bill allows it under a special approval provided the animal is based in a fixed exhibit and the minimum public display requirement is met.

I will ask my colleague, Marguerite, to answer a number of the specific items mentioned this morning.

Ms Clarke: The main issue I want to address is that this morning there has been quite a lot of discussion about the 900 hour requirement being in a fixed exhibit. That is actually a misunderstanding. A licence can only be issued for a category C animal for exhibit in a fixed exhibit, essentially. Separate to that, there is a requirement for 900 hours of public display. It would be possible for a new circus to set up in Queensland and develop a fixed exhibit, but spend most of their time on the road and meet most of the 900 hours or indeed all of the 900 hours doing public displays on the road.

But we are requiring them to have a home base. It is very similar to what Rob was actually suggesting. We are requiring them to have a home base and for that to be able to be opened to fixed exhibit. The reason for that is simply that in that home base we can be sure that those needs are met by engineering controls. Also, if we become concerned about the on-the-road exhibit and we do not renew their approval then they can fall back to being able to exhibit those animals in a fixed exhibit. There seems to be a bit of a misunderstanding by a few people. The 900 hours does not have to be in fixed exhibit. Some of that could be public exhibit on the road.

There were quite a large number of other points raised. If there were certain issues that struck the committee that you would like to have addressed, I am happy to do that. I could start going through my notes. I will be guided by you, Chair.

CHAIR: I understand there was a range of issues. It was very comprehensive. Dr Paterson from the RSPCA mentioned that the Commonwealth government is working on a national policy and regulation around these kinds of issues. I just wonder if you could speak to that a little? What do you know of where that is at?

Ms Clarke: It is actually facilitated by the Commonwealth. It has been over a number of years. They would not be a Commonwealth government standard. They would be implemented in state legislation for each state. We have been involved in the development of those national standards. They have been partly sponsored by the Zoo and Aquarium Association. In the development of those standards one of the provisos was that an industry group was willing to come on board and put up some of the funding. So the Zoo and Aquarium Association put their hand up for that. That is why those standards are largely focused on zoos.

Those standards are in the final stages of completion. They would need to then go to a national ministerial council for sign-off. Subject to their finalisation and the government reviewing them, we would propose that they would be picked up under this bill as codes of practice. There is a little bit of work to be done because of the fact that they were developed with a focus on the zoo sector of the industry. We do need to go through those and look at where they appropriately apply to all exhibitors and where they are only applicable to a fixed exhibit.

In the main, certainly the draft standards are generally applicable. For example, there was an example around crocodilians. It required that crocodiles have a regular enclosure where they have access to areas where they could bask and access to areas of water so they can control their temperature. We think that would be a reasonable expectation to place on any exhibiter no matter what their normal mode of operation. Those sorts of things in the national standards we would look at proposing apply to all exhibitors. There might be a few small aspects that are very specific to how a zoo operates.

CHAIR: We talk about 900 hours of exhibiting and you say it does not have to be in a fixed exhibit it could be while they are on the road. How would you determine that?

Ms Clarke: The way the legislation is written it does not actually refer to 900 hours in a fixed exhibit. It just talks about 900 hours and it not being a private event. That is simply because it is very difficult for us to confirm an exhibition at a private event. A private event does not provide the same level of oversight. So you are essentially selecting the audience.

In the industry the amount of public oversight is very important. We constantly receive feedback from the public about things that they are concerned about. While we can use very little of that information in a formal sense, it does alert us to issues that might be developing and we will investigate those. So public oversight is a very important aspect of ensuring that risks are managed in the industry.

There was one other thing—you just reminded me—that was mentioned. It was about the one exhibit per month. Currently for a demonstrator only one animal kept under the licence essentially needs to be exhibited every month. We have a lot of concerns about that, particularly in that you could exhibit one animal but have a quite enormous essentially private collection behind that. So one of the things that this bill does is it says one animal per species, so at least you are putting out that species once a month.

There was some discussion in consultation. In fact we went out with a particular question on it as to whether it should be each animal. But the trouble is there are so many circumstances like breeding or sickness or that sort of thing where every animal could not be put on exhibit. Rather than have very, very complex exceptions and requirements for veterinary certificates which we felt would become way too burdensome, we have kind of found a middle position which is one animal of each species. That was, as I say, something that we consulted on. We do have a lot of concerns about it only being one animal under the licence at the moment. This bill quite specifically proposes one animal per species.

Mr BENNETT: I just have two questions around the management plan. I am trying to get my head around that. One question that was raised by numerous presenters here this morning was about the capacity of the department to deal with the management plans and where they sit within the department. Would you like to comment on that? Secondly, there were comments from the circus industry about some species not being able to be exhibited in Queensland. I understood that under a risk based model they could expand and have opportunities to bring exotic species into their business.

Ms Clarke: I will deal with the management plans first. In the requirements for what needs to be in a management plan you are essentially saying what animal the plan concerns, identifying what sorts of dealings and exhibits with it that you want to do—and that is the bit where you get to set up, 'This is what I am proposing'—and then identifying any significant risks associated with that and how you are going to deal with them. For some animals—and I am thinking here, for example, of magicians who keep European rabbits—I think the only significant risk you would really speak to would be around keeping it secure because of course we have areas of Queensland which we try to keep free from rabbits. The other one would be around keeping the rabbit in the hat in a confined space, for example, and how you were going to manage some of those risks.

The management plan for many species would be extremely brief. There will be some species that are kept recreationally where you may have difficulty finding a significant risk that you needed to list and describe how you were going to deal with. On the other hand, there will be a lot of animals that have much more significant risks. As Pat mentioned, some will be in category A but some could equally be in some of the other categories. Pat gave the example of the spinifex hopping mouse. It is a category B animal but you would be struggling to find significant risks there. So the management plan for that animal would be quite short. At the moment we have list based legislation. We have lists of what you can and cannot have and if you have this and this sort of exhibition you can do this. There are all these combinations. We are trying to avoid going to new legislation that reinstates lists. That is why we have proposed that it be around significant risks.

Mr BENNETT: My question was about how the department is going to deal with this perceived extra pile of management plans that end up on the CEO's desk. There were a lot of questions asked about how the department is going to handle it.

Ms Clarke: There are a couple of things there. First of all, the day the legislation commences not everyone will need their licence. They can continue under their current licence until it is due for expiry and then they will apply for a licence under this legislation. So over a period of two to three years we will be looking at those changed applications. We will have already assessed a lot of those risk mitigations for category C animals when people put in an exhibit notice to first keep them. So essentially for those it will be relatively easy to check that what they are saying in their management plan is ways of managing their animals that we have already approved.

Admittedly there will be quite a lot of native animals that we have not had management plans for in the past. It is something that we will have to put more resources towards because essentially, if we did not believe it was necessary for those risk management plans to be documented, we would not be proposing that way forward. We do think there are some risks that people perhaps have not formally thought of and documented how they are managing them.

The other thing is that we would look at holding some workshops and developing some sample management plans especially for some of those most commonly kept species. We have actually done a little bit of work on that already, but it is not at a point where we could share it with anyone. We are looking at some of the most commonly kept species and some sample management plans. The danger with that of course is that we want management plans to provide flexibility. So as soon as we go down the route of suggesting how the risk will be managed, we do not want people feeling like they have to do it that way. We are just trying to give people some examples and some ideas. Some people at the moment do keep animals simply according to a relevant code of practice. It is reasonably easy for us to put out a sample of how that management plan might look with the parts of that relevant code written across.

Mr BENNETT: The second part of that was about people's capacity to expand their businesses in Queensland.

Ms Clarke: At the moment there are, as I said, lists and categories of exhibit that you can do. So the most commonly cited one is the fact that there is a list of exotic animals you can keep in a zoo. The reasons for that list are largely historic. I was not around but I understand that essentially people asked, 'What are in zoos in Queensland at the moment? Okay, that is the list—no more.' Sometimes it is quite arbitrary. It has been an enormous frustration for the zoo industry that they can bring to us an animal they would like to keep in Queensland. The animal seems to have a lot lower risk than some of the animals that are on the list of what you can have, yet we cannot licence them to keep those. For the circus sector of the industry, there is even a subset of that that they can have in a circus. That list would have been written at a time when there were a lot more circuses in Queensland and they held a greater variety of animals. There is a much smaller number of species that are currently kept in Queensland in circuses albeit they are mostly circuses coming from interstate. Essentially for any exhibitor, if you are prepared to develop a fixed exhibit as your base, you could show us how you are going to mitigate the risk and we could potentially approve that.

I just want to qualify that a little bit. As someone mentioned, there are some species that are probably very unsuitable for any travelling exhibit, whether they are based in a fixed exhibit or not. A Komodo dragon might not be terribly suitable. A great ape might not be very suitable. I am no animal expert—I am a bit nervous here. But there would certainly be some species. It would not matter if you were a zoo or a circus or whatever. You would have to have some quite extraordinary measures in place before we would look at giving a special exhibition approval for those.

CHAIR: Marguerite, there was some concern about the 12-month permits. Are they currently three-year permits?

Ms Clarke: At the moment if you are a New South Wales licensed circus you can apply for a Queensland permit. A Queensland permit is actually called a declared pest permit. Those declared pest permits are for up to two years. Under this bill, if you are a New South Wales licensed circus, you would not need a licence in Queensland; you just need an approval to bring your animals that are licensed in New South Wales into Queensland for a period that can be for up to 12 months. So it is a different system. Essentially if you are a circus at the moment and you are operating in New South Wales and Queensland you need a licence in New South Wales and a permit in Queensland. Under this new legislation you would have your primary licence, say, in New South Wales and an interstate exhibitors permit to bring them into Queensland for up to 12 months.

CHAIR: What was the rationale behind changing that, by introducing the 12 months?

Ms Clarke: In the 2014 bill we had actually made that six months. Our concern is around making sure that that is regularly reviewed. As has already been mentioned, New South Wales requires a fixed space—like a home base for a layover period for its circuses. That is fairly similar to what we are expecting here where we would require them to be based in a fixed exhibit. I guess the difference is that New South Wales at the moment does not require them necessarily to have any exhibit in that fixed space. We are actually proposing that the fixed base would be a place that they could exhibit. So they can fall back to that if there are any problems with that mobile.

Otherwise it is reasonably similar in one sense. The question is six months or 12 months. It is just a matter of trying to find the right balance. We have heard this morning from Dr Paterson that she feels 12 months is too long and she believes six months is more appropriate. There have been others who have suggested that 12 months is too short. Certainly when we appeared before the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee there was some evidence presented that some circuses were having tours that went for nine to 11 months and six months would fall right in the middle of that. So we had a discussion. We believe regular review is important but we did feel we could manage the risk with the review each 12 months.

Mrs GILBERT: Just going back to management plans, you were saying that it would depend on the significant risk. We did hear from Rob this morning about the varying levels of expertise and training of different carers and handlers within the industry. How are you going to define what is a significant risk opposed to a non-significant risk? How are you going to put those guidelines out there so that they are understood across the industry?

Ms Clarke: In the application process in the bill essentially the department can indicate to someone who has made an application that we feel that their application is lacking some information and we can suggest to them ways they could amend their management plan to address our concerns without having to refuse it. So if someone put in an application for a high-risk animal, such as a tiger, and we saw some quite significant risks that they had not addressed, we would go back to them and say, 'We think these are significant. The chief executive, or the delegate in practice, would not feel able to sign off that they could be confident the risks were going to be managed under the plan as it is, but we think if you looked at some issues around how you are going to deal with'—again, I am going to show my lack of knowledge of the industry—'the risks associated with when the enclosures need to be cleaned or when in certain circumstances the animal needs to be transported somewhere or things like that.' We would be able to point out to them significant risks that we felt needed to be addressed in the plan that had not been.

Expertise is definitely a way of addressing some of those significant risks. So there would be circumstances in which one of the ways the risks would be addressed would be that only people who had X experience would be allowed to handle the animal in that circumstance or would be able to do that activity with the animal. Again, one of the reasons for moving to management plans is so that we are not putting all that in a regulation. We are not saying, 'If you want to do this, you need this expertise.' We are allowing people to come to us with a package that says, 'Here are the risks. This is how we are going to manage them,' which might be a bit different from the zoo down the road or a demonstrator in another part of Queensland, and we can look at them and assess the application on its merits.

Mrs GILBERT: On a practical note, does the department have enough resources to get through those risk management plans? I think Tania touched on the fact that she is trying to run a business and she cannot wait for six weeks to be able to fulfil your contracts to keep her business running. Is that practical?

Mr Bell: I think the key answer to that is the implementation process will require some dedicated focus on the risk assessment process. This bill, if it is passed, will be implemented concurrently with the Biosecurity Act. We have gone through a detailed implementation process for that and already prepared planning guidelines and assessment guidelines, a risk based decision-making framework, and that has already been approved by the agency.

So we could see a similar sort of risk based decision-making framework being applied in this space and part of the implementation is delivering guidelines and fact sheets for industry on how they would comply. So, yes, there would be some additional focus required during the implementation process, but the department would apply those resources as is required.

Ms Clarke: Something that came up with respect to that, if you do not mind me addressing it, was around this idea that if we have not been able to make a decision in time it gets refused. I just want to briefly explain that that is a fairly common provision and the reason it is there is so that if someone is not getting an answer in time they can actually go the next step and appeal the

decision. Essentially, it gives them a decision that they can escalate. So if they are not getting an answer in a reasonable period of time at the normal level, they can choose to escalate it. It is certainly not something that we would feel would disadvantage users.

Mr BENNETT: That is common across government anyway, isn't it?

Ms Clarke: It is fairly common, yes.

Mr Bell: It essentially applies discipline on the department to make prompt decisions.

Ms Clarke: With the permission of the Chair, there was another issue raised several times that has just occurred to me that might be good to address. It is around consultation of entities. There is a history to this being in the bill, so if you will indulge me I will explain and it might make it a little clearer. You might know that there were some provisions around the preparation of impact statements for all regulations that used to be in legislation. They are now actually out of legislation and in policy, but the policy is around regulatory impact statements and when consultation needs to occur, when there are going to be significant impacts and so on. The relevant parts of this bill had in there some requirements around consultation before a code of practice was adopted but not others. Early in the development of the bill some people pointed this out and pointed out that the Biosecurity Act, which has some relation to this, had some requirements there for consultation. So, to allay fears, we copied the relevant provisions of the Biosecurity Act across to this bill with only minor amendments. In retrospect I wish we had not and the reason is that those provisions very crudely put some consultation requirements in place. They require us to consult with entities that the chief executive considers would have an interest, and that could include animal welfare and animal rights groups. But, to be honest, the requirements of the regulatory impact statement system would already require us to consult very broadly, including with the public, if there were going to be significant impacts. I think what it has done is raised concerns about where the department and the government might get its policy direction from that were never intended and this certainly is no indication that we would be approaching consultation that we would not already be required to take under the regulatory impact statement system.

Mr Bell: I think the key issue there is it may have misled some groups to think that specific groups or positions would be weighed more heavily than other members of the community.

CHAIR: There certainly is a sense from all of the bodies that are here today—that is, animal liberation people are concerned about circuses and then we hear the argument, 'The government just wants to stop circuses,' and those kinds of general comments. What sort of evidence do you have? How do you backup some of the decisions that you have made around those premises—that is, that they are being persecuted by animal liberation groups and by public perception?

Ms Clarke: We have not based our recommendations to government on any particular position put forward by animal liberation groups. We have based it on how we believe the risk can best be managed. Those groups have an appropriate input into that in terms of highlighting issues that they are concerned about, but in the end it is around risk assessment. Pat mentioned the hierarchy of hazard control. That is a very well internationally accepted hierarchy that basically says that if there is an option to put in place, what they tend to call, engineering controls which is fixed fences or lockable gates that are permanently in place that is generally much more reliable than administrative controls which are based on an individual every day following a certain procedure that safeguards risks. So that is where we are coming from, particularly in that whole discussion around category C animals. We are not saying—and it should not be taken as a reflection on any individual—that it would not be possible for some demonstrators to manage the risks associated with category C animals. There is no doubt about that. The issue is that it is much more difficult for us to ensure that level of compliance and that some of the risk mitigation measures that they would be taking would be those administrative controls, which are very difficult because you have to check they are complying on a daily basis. They could be complying one day; they may not be complying the next day. So no-one is saying that zoos and circuses cannot—could not—manage the risks; it is about being able to enforce the measures and ensure that they are.

Mr Bell: In terms of persecution of particular industry groups, I think the department is unlikely to be looking for evidence for persecution but what we would very much do in our briefing notes to ministers or submissions to the government is look at the evidence and the merit of the cases and whether or not particular positions could be substantiated and provide an unbiased view based on the merit and weight of evidence that we could identify. So I guess you could lead to a conclusion that perhaps some of the evidence did not support positions that were perhaps put by some industry groups because they were not meritorious, but I am not sure we would sort of head towards a persecution role.

Ms Clarke: One of the questions we were asked just recently in the queries that came from the committee was about incidents. We have provided a couple of examples. It is difficult for us because we do not want to provide a lot of information that could damage someone's reputation and we want to avoid giving lots of details of incidents, but we certainly have provided—and I imagine that they might become public in the future—just a couple of very recent incidents. There certainly are incidents reported to the department that we investigate where we would have some concerns.

CHAIR: Okay. Is that something you can share with us?

Ms Clarke: We have provided it in the written submission that you asked for.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr SORENSEN: A couple of speakers today said it would be easier to set up in New South Wales and then bring the circus and animals from New South Wales up here. Do you agree with that?

Ms Clarke: We have spoken to our counterparts in New South Wales. There are only a very, very small number of mobile demonstrators with exotic animals and New South Wales has relatively recently prohibited any reptiles and amphibians being in those mobile collections, although I understand there is still a legacy of some from the past. Someone mentioned today a particular New South Wales exhibitor who has cats. He is actually based in a fixed exhibit now. The other exhibitors are circuses. They are based in New South Wales. They are required now to have a layover—essentially a permanent home that they return to at least once a year—so it is a bit similar. The one difference is that under this bill we are proposing that at that fixed base they would be capable of exhibiting. That gives that fallback if there are any issues with the mobile exhibit and it also essentially ensures that that fix based could be under public view.

CHAIR: In terms of consultation, a lot of the bodies have said that they feel that the department have not listened, that they have not been listened to in their views. What sorts of opportunities have they had to have input?

Ms Clarke: We have it documented and it is in the front of the explanatory notes for the bill. I am happy to go through it again.

CHAIR: I just thought you might like the opportunity now to just go through it.

Ms Clarke: I guess one of the difficulties for us is that where we get divergent opinions on a topic obviously some people can feel unheard because the government did not choose to go down the route that they proposed. That is not the case. There has been quite a lot of consultation and we have always put up the views of all of those who are represented. It is just that in the end not everybody agreed on some of those matters. Beginning in 2007 or 2008 there was a discussion paper about developing a single piece of legislation for the industry. There were workshops with industry in 2011 and in 2012 going through what might be the key principals underlying the legislation. There was a regulatory impact statement that went out in 2013, I think. It covered both the bill and the proposed regulations, so it also put out some potential fees and the total costs that would be involved for different exhibitors of different sizes with lots of case studies in there. Before the 2014 bill was introduced into parliament we were permitted to discuss a working draft with industry nominees. Any person from industry was allowed to nominate to be part of that one-day workshop and we went through and made some changes as a result. So we feel that we have provided many opportunities for people to have input. Unfortunately I hear that not everybody feels heard, but it is often because there are divergent opinions.

CHAIR: How would you respond to the claim that the areas that the bill attempts to encapsulate are too broad, that they are too diverse, that the zoo industry is just too different to the circus industry to the mobile operator industry?

Ms Clarke: As represented this morning, the sectors are very clearly distinct, but that is not always the case from the point of view of the department. We might have an example of someone who wants to provide adult entertainment using animals. This is a real example; that is why I am putting it out there. Are they a demonstrator or a circus? We had someone apply to display animals behind perspex in a bar. That is a fixed exhibit. Does that make them a zoo? From the point of view of the department, some of those distinctions between sectors are not as clear as they might appear to individual exhibitors out there. In fact, probably one of the things that has become very obvious over the last decade is how blurred some of those lines are. That is why it is increasingly important that we have a consistent basis for assessing applications. New South Wales has gone down the line for some of their demonstrators where essentially they assess the merits of a

demonstration and how much conservation benefit or educational benefit there might be. It is very subjective I guess. This bill does not do that. Essentially it says, 'If it's an exhibit, we're going to assume there's some public benefit and what we require is you to show you can manage the risks.' But, yes, it is increasingly difficult to differentiate on the edges of some of those sectors.

Mr Bell: I think it is consistent with the philosophy of the bill that we are about managing risks rather than managing very specific sorts of sectors of the economy. Animal welfare risk is a priority within the space. Pest potential risk is the other key one, and for pest potential risks, yes, certainly some of the standards in some sectors will be higher. But it is a risk is a risk is a risk.

CHAIR: How does Queensland sit? Is this bill more conservative than other states around Australia?

Ms Clarke: The Queensland industry is very different from other states. Queensland actually has a relatively very large and private industry. In nearly every other state the largest exhibitor is the state government. So if you think about New South Wales, you are talking Taronga Zoo and Dubbo and in Victoria we have the Melbourne Zoo and Werribee. Those are the two other largest states.

Queensland is very different. Its industry is private. There are only a couple of very small government parks, in fact. It has quite a high proportion of exhibitors per head of population, largely because, with international visitors coming, it is a very important part of their Australian experience to go and see wildlife. So it is difficult to compare industries. Tasmania, for example, does not have mobile demonstrators except for some people who have a herpetology permit and they can also do some display on the side. In Victoria, the only circuses it has visiting now are those ones based in New South Wales, I understand. So it is not at all uniform around the country. New South Wales, as I say, has pretty much all the large circuses in Australia remaining. There are obviously a couple of circuses, as we mentioned in some of the documents—smaller circuses in Queensland. I not quite sure if I answered your question there.

CHAIR: No, you did. That is good. Do you have any statistics or any figures? Has there been quite a large drop-off on circus attendance and also circus businesses?

Ms Clarke: We do not have any figures on circus attendance. We could bring out some figures on the number of circuses licensed in Queensland and there has been a dramatic decline.

CHAIR: Yes. That would be good. Are there any more questions? Thanks Marguerite and Patrick.

Mr Bell: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: That finalises this morning's hearing. I would just like to thank everybody most sincerely for their input today. It was incredibly articulate and heartfelt. It was a great opportunity for us to hear everything you had to say. So thank you.

I should just say to the departmental officers that we would need your answers to any questions that we had today by Friday this week. If anyone wishes to raise any further matters with the committee, I would encourage you to do so by writing to the committee staff. We are required to report on this bill by 8 May—next Friday. Thank you.

Committee adjourned at 1.17 pm