

Agriculture and Environment Committee

Parliament House

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Distinguished Members,

I have worked in a professional capacity with wildlife since 1991, this includes conducting fauna surveys, performing fauna relocations, fauna education and working with captive fauna privately and commercially. I am presently a mobile exhibitor here in Queensland.

My aim is to exhibit various species of fauna in a safe and educational way, such that all people are able to better appreciate the greater environment around them.

While I truly believe that the aim and purpose of this Bill is both honourable and timely, I note that there are flaws contained which prevent these from being equally implemented.

My major concerns revolve around one point, that of mobile exhibitors apparently being treated as unprofessional. This can be deduced from the simple notion that while fixed exhibitors are deemed satisfactorily able to reduce relevant risks to a suitable level for Cat C species, mobile exhibitors are not.

I arrive at this conclusion after careful reading of all submitted literature on this Bill from Exhibited Animals. It is quite clear that the aim is to allow Queensland Fixed Exhibitors the opportunities so far denied them, which is to be able to exhibit all species of fauna legally obtainable in Australia. While I whole heartedly agree that this should be the case, I equally disagree that mobile exhibitors should be denied the same opportunities.

Built into the Bill are a whole suite of checks and balances to ensure compliance with the theme of reduced risk to the environment and people. These checks and balances are rightfully there, but they should not be undermined by the narrow minded reasoning that private mobile exhibitors are unable to satisfactorily reduce the relevant risks to an acceptable level.

For sure not all mobile exhibitors will be able to satisfactorily reduce the relevant risks as determined in this very Bill. But should the opportunity to those that can be denied?

The restriction of Cat C species to fixed exhibitors only, is ensuring that a monopoly is in place for those businesses. As well as allowing interstate business access to the Queensland market, yet denying Queensland business' the very same opportunity. This stance is illogical from a competition point of view.

I can accept the other burdens the presented Bill imposes on me, such as increased costs and paperwork. What I cannot accept is the presumption that I do not have the ability to manage the stated relevant risks as presented in the Bill. I am being tried and convicted without a fair trial. It is not about me deciding I want a tiger in the backyard, it is about me exploring other business opportunities that I can manage and take advantage of.

The reality is that I have in mind a couple of unique business ideas which I would like to explore. To bring this plan to fruition I require access to a small number of Cat C species. I know I can manage the relevant risks to a level acceptable to Exhibited Animals. If I cannot then I should not be issued a licence. So because someone else cannot manage those same risks why should I be penalised?

It should also be noted that should I have the opportunity to follow these business plans the next step would be to legally acquire those species. This in itself is a very difficult proposition, very few opportunities are out there for acquisition by private mobile exhibitors. This further reduces the relevant risks.

If one took the time to study the possibility of introducing an exotic species into the Australian environment, the conclusion would be reached it is in fact extremely difficult to establish a foreign species in a niche already occupied by a native species. This Bill ensures that all Cat C species are known, are registered and are controlled. Should fears about the sky falling down overshadow the science and logic? Mobile exhibitors offer no greater relevant risk than fixed exhibitors conforming to the same piece of legislation.

So in conclusion the restriction of Cat C species only to fixed exhibitors should be removed, and allow the checks and balances built into the Bill to stand on their own merit. This would allow an equal playing field for all exhibitors, some would be able to take up this opportunity many will not. The end result would be a public better educated about the environment around them and the influences we have on it, which reduced risk to biosecurity and public security. I defy anybody to present to me an arguable case why mobile exhibitors should be prevented from the same opportunities as fixed exhibitors.

Yours Sincerely

Euan Edwards