



# ***HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr R Molhoek MP—Chair  
Ms SL Bolton MP  
Ms K-A Dooley MP  
Mr JP Kelly MP  
Mr DJL Lee MP  
Dr BF O'Shea MP

**Staff present:**

Dr J Rutherford—Committee Secretary  
Miss A Bonenfant—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Wednesday, 2 April 2025**

**Brisbane**

## **WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2025**

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**The committee met at 10.35 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. My name is Robert Molhoek. I am the member for Southport and chair of the committee. I acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. With me today are: Mr Joe Kelly, the member for Greenslopes and deputy chair; Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Mr David Lee, the member for Hervey Bay; Dr Barbara O'Shea, the member for South Brisbane; and Ms Kerri-Anne Dooley, the member for Redcliffe.

This briefing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing at the discretion of the committee. I remind committee members that officers are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House.

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**HERSE, Ms Karalyn, Manager, Environment and Conservation Policy and Legislation, Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation**

**KLAASSEN, Mr Ben, Deputy Director-General, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation**

**LLOYD, Mr Kahil, Acting Deputy Director-General, Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation**

**McKEAY, Ms Jackie, Executive Director, Waste and Enforcement Services, Environmental Services and Regulation, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation**

**NORTHAM, Mr Adam, Manager, Permissions Management and Ecotourism, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships, Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. I invite you to brief the committee, after which the committee will have some questions. Thank you.

**Mr Lloyd:** Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. I would like to start by making a brief opening statement. My name is Kahil Lloyd, and I am the Acting Deputy Director-General of the Environment and Heritage Policy and Programs division in the department. With me today are: Ben Klaassen, the Deputy Director-General from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships; Jackie McKeay, the Executive Director of Waste and Enforcement Services; Adam Northam, the Manager of Permissions Management and Ecotourism; and Karalyn Herse, the Manager of Environment and Conservation Policy and Legislation.

The Nature Conservation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 is about making sure there is a clear and contemporary legislative framework for using approved electronic systems to automatically deal with particular low-risk authorities under both the Nature Conservation Act 1992

and the Environmental Protection Act 1994. It aligns with and reinforces the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation's existing approach for automatically dealing with low-risk authorities under both of these acts.

Like many other areas of government, the department has been using electronic systems for several years, consistent with public preference for, and reliance on, digital platforms. Each year, thousands of authorities are issued under both the Nature Conservation Act and the Environmental Protection Act. These range from low-risk activities, such as keeping a pet blue-tongue lizard, to high-risk activities, such as operating a large resource project. Different types of applications require different levels of assessment proportionate to the environmental or conservation risk. This bill deals specifically with the use of electronic systems to automatically deal with low-risk activities. It has no effect on the robust and rigorous approvals process that larger projects are subject to.

Currently for activities that are considered low risk the department does not apply discretion to assess the applications for these authorities, so long as the relevant mandatory criteria are satisfied. This means that departmental officers can focus their time on assessing applications for higher risk activities, such as site-specific applications from environmental authorities or applications that involve interacting with native animals. Some examples of the higher risk activities involving interactions with native animals include: spotter catcher services for the relocation of animals from development sites; removing native animals to address community safety concerns; and the care and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned native animals. These activities often require specialist knowledge and have the potential to pose a greater risk to native animals. On the other hand, while particular knowledge of animal care is necessary, the keeping and trading of captive-bred native animals is overall a lower risk activity.

The changes proposed in the bill will enable the continued use of electronic systems to automatically issue authorities for low-risk activities, reducing red tape for individuals and businesses. The bill also includes a validation provision for existing and past authorities that were automatically issued using an electronic system. This will apply whether or not the system was approved at the time and irrespective of the criteria included in the system. The intent of the validation is to ensure that these authorities can continue to be relied upon by the holders as valid from the date of issue.

For the Nature Conservation Act, the bill clarifies the power for an approved electronic system to automatically issue and deal with low-risk permits and licences. The system must be approved by the chief executive and it is proposed that it will be used to issue low-risk animal licences, such as pet keeping—for example, licences to keep various lizards, non-venomous snakes, birds and other native animals—and to confirm arrangements for permits for camping in protected areas, such as national parks. Approximately 25 licences a day are issued to applicants for native animal keeping alone in Queensland.

For the Environmental Protection Act, the bill clarifies the process to authorise an electronic system to issue an environmental authority where a standard application has been made. These environmental authorities—EAs—have been automatically granted through an electronic system since 2017, but the process to authorise an electronic system to automatically issue the authority was not clearly outlined in the legislation. Again, the amendments ensure that operators of businesses that carry out low-risk activities can continue to obtain EAs quickly and easily, where they are able to comply with the published standard conditions. I will point out that the department can and does enforce compliance with those conditions, but the application process itself is very straightforward and does not require a site-by-site assessment. The applicant needs to state that they can meet the eligibility criteria and standard conditions as well as be a registered suitable operator under the act and then the EA must be granted under the legislation.

Importantly, the bill places a specific requirement on the chief executive to require that the electronic system is operated in a way that ensures it is compliant with the act. The bill also ensures that, where authorities have been, or are to be, automatically granted, all existing review rights are safeguarded and maintained as if the decision were made by a chief executive or a delegate of the chief executive. The focus is on enabling an electronic system to support government processes and focus resources on assessments of those applications that are of higher risk or maintaining the rights of individuals. There is no discretion in the types of authorities that can be automatically issued. This means that if an applicant meets the criteria they must be issued with the authority. If they do not meet the criteria, or if they are seeking an authority for a higher risk activity such as the keeping of a dangerous snake, the application can be made through the electronic system but the chief executive, or delegate, must decide the application.

In relation to the Nature Conservation Act, amendments to subordinate legislation will be required to establish clear criteria and a framework for animal authorities suitable to be dealt with automatically. Consequential amendments will also be required to subordinate legislation to ensure the continuity of processes for issuing camping permits for protected areas. As part of the department's initial written briefing for the committee, the department has provided an exposure draft of the proposed amendment regulation which contains these amendments as well as an information sheet that provides further background on the animal authorities. The specific animal authorities proposed to be included in the amendment regulation for the automatic issuing are: a standard licence, which is for keeping a small number of protected animals as a pet; and a specialised or advanced licence, which is for keeping or trading larger collections of protected animals that are not dangerous.

Finally, the bill also amends the transitional provisions in the Environmental Protection Act to make it absolutely clear and put beyond doubt that an administering authority may issue a penalty infringement notice under certain former sections of the Environmental Protection Act where noncompliance has been identified. The Environmental Protection Act was amended in 2024 to introduce a new compliance tool called an environmental enforcement order, but the bill puts beyond doubt that any noncompliance under the former orders—namely, an environmental protection order, a direction notice or a clean-up notice—is still able to be enforced through the issuance of a penalty infringement notice. This is simply a clarifying amendment. This completes our opening statement and we would be happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned low-risk approvals or automatic approvals for things like pets—reptiles, snakes and the like. How does the system account for the fact that a lot of councils have local laws around the keeping of certain species and pets? Does it override the councils? Does it complement them? Does it pick up the variations between one local authority and another? How do you manage that aspect of this system?

**Mr Lloyd:** That is a good question. They would be complementary. This framework exists as it currently is and would not replace anything at a local government level from their planning scheme.

**CHAIR:** If you are wanting to keep a dangerous snake, for example, would that require someone to have two approvals, one from the council and one from the department? How does the system work in Queensland?

**Mr Lloyd:** You absolutely would need an approval under the Nature Conservation Act for that one, but there would be no change to the status quo. The bill itself does not change anything around. If there was a requirement to get an approval or a licence at a local government level, that would remain. It would depend on each council and what they have in place.

**CHAIR:** Can you perhaps run us through some other examples of low-risk activities for which automatic approvals would occur under the new system? We have heard pets and snakes, but what are some other examples of how that would apply?

**Mr Lloyd:** We could certainly get some of the examples. There are three licence types. There are the standard licences, which are around keeping a small number of protected animals—certain birds, amphibians, frogs and other things—and other non-dangerous animals. I used the example in my opening of a pet blue-tongue lizard, but it is those sorts of things which would continue. They have been automatically issued, so they would be continued under this framework. Then there are specialised licences, which, again, is around keeping collections of protected animals as pets or hobbies. 'Hobby' is keeping larger collections of non-dangerous snakes such as pythons and those sorts of things. Thirdly, there is an advanced licence, which would be keeping or trading unlimited numbers of protected animals as pets or hobbies—so certain birds, amphibians and non-dangerous ones as well, but it would be like a pet shop which specialises in native animal trade which would be getting those sorts of licences. Those three are the ones which, under the proposed regulation, would continue to be automatically issued.

**Mr J KELLY:** I thought keeping a blue-tongue lizard would be cheap, but it costs you \$15 for the lizard and \$1,000 for the gear to keep it alive.

**CHAIR:** I have three or four running around the backyard. You are quite welcome to come and collect them. They scare my wife.

**Mr J KELLY:** No, do not pick them up and keep them as pets, Rob; I think that might be against the law.

**CHAIR:** They are just living there. They are squatters.

**Mr J KELLY:** We might get Adrian Schinnerer onto that! This seems like an incredibly light bill. There are two provisions in it. Why was the decision made to bring this bill through to legislation in this way rather than pursue it as part of an omnibus bill?

**Mr Lloyd:** I cannot really talk to the policy intent or that aspect. A review undertaken by the department identified—there was emerging case law through the process and a need to keep frameworks contemporary and current—that it would be necessary, both under the Environmental Protection Act and the Nature Conservation Act, to put beyond doubt that a system can be used to automatically issue a licence or authority. The urgency for the legislation relates primarily to a risk that automatically issued authorities could potentially be invalid, because of the review the department has undertaken. For the Nature Conservation Act, there was not a clear framework or criteria under the legislation, particularly for those authorities to provide for automatic approvals. The validity of some of the authorities issued using the automated process was being called into question. The bill addresses this risk by putting the validity of previous automatic authorities beyond doubt. It also ensures that contemporary and appropriate legislative provisions for electronic systems to automatically deal with particular authorities are in place going forward.

Effectively, the framework is set up in such a way that if you state you can meet the relevant conditions and you can comply with the eligibility criteria under the Environmental Protection Act, if you are a registered suitable operator and if you meet the mandatory prerequisite requirements that you are suitable under the Nature Conservation Act—so you do not have a relevant conviction or something like that—then the legislation and the regulation require the department to issue it. All this legislation is doing is putting in place that authority for the chief executive to formally tick off that a system can be used for that purpose.

**Mr J KELLY:** Given the amount of legislative resources we suck up in the parliament to pursue something like this, was it a departmental decision or a ministerial decision to pursue this piece of legislation this way, rather than wrapping it up into some sort of omnibus bill?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of how I have answered that one previously, I would give a similar answer around this one. It really is urgent to provide certainty and clarity about those existing authorities which are out there, to put it beyond doubt that they—

**Mr J KELLY:** The question is: did the minister request that this legislation be brought through in this way or was this a departmental briefing to the minister suggesting that he needed to do this urgently?

**Mr Lloyd:** The department certainly identified the issue as we were going through a review, and that identified the need to amend the legislation.

**Mr J KELLY:** No consideration was given to including this as part of an omnibus bill so that we would not utilise the resources of parliament for such minor, technical changes?

**Mr Lloyd:** From the department's point of view, we were certainly keen to get this issue resolved sooner rather than later, to put that issue beyond doubt. From our point of view, that was the urgency behind it.

**Mr J KELLY:** In relation to proposed—

**CHAIR:** Member, you are straying—

**Mr J KELLY:** I think asking questions about the use of parliamentary resources to deal with legislation is quite reasonable. Proposed amendments to section 177, 'Deemed decision for standard application for mining activity relating to mining lease in particular circumstances', appear to concern where no decision (inaudible) approval is deemed to be given effect. What is the substantive effect of the proposed changes?

**Mr Lloyd:** There is no change in the bill itself around standard environmental authorities and the requirement to issue those. Standard environmental authorities under the Environmental Protection Act are for those lower risk activities. We set out a range of eligibility criteria and standard conditions under that framework. There are two aspects to standard applications under the Environmental Protection Act. There are ones which are for prescribed environmental relevant authorities; they also pick up other resource activities—some authorities to prospect under the Petroleum and Gas Act and other resource framework ones. That process has not changed in the bill itself. Effectively, all the bill is doing around that is providing a head of power that the automatic issuing of the EA can continue.

In terms of mining leases under the Environmental Protection Act, nothing has changed in the bill around that either. It is just a way of reordering the sections, just to make it clear, but a standard environmental authority application for a mining lease will continue to need to be decided by a delegate or the chief executive.

**Mr J KELLY:** There is no effect of overcoming relevant environmental protections in terms of this section?

**Mr Lloyd:** There is no change proposed. It is just a restructuring, just to make it clear how the automatic approval process would work. In terms of the bill itself, currently under the Environmental Protection Act for a standard environmental authority application, if it is that you are a registered suitable operator and you have stated that you can meet the eligibility criteria and can comply with the standard conditions, under the framework there is no option but for the chief executive to issue the authority. It says 'must'—we must issue the relevant environmental authority. This framework maintains that as the status quo. In the current act—so prior to the bill—the standard environmental authority process has a deemed provision. Effectively, if it was not decided by the chief executive it would be deemed to have been approved within 10 business days. Effectively, it is just putting beyond doubt in this bill that the environmental authority has been issued on the day that it was provided back to the person.

**Ms DOOLEY:** Thank you for your presentation. How would these changes embed best practice?

**Mr Lloyd:** The bill is about contemporising the framework so that it is keeping up with contemporary ways of administration. Electronic systems are used generally for a range of matters. In one like this, we already have the requirements. The Environmental Protection Act is probably a good example where there is already an obligation on us. As a way of easing business and assisting that, if you can tick the boxes and say that you are able to comply with the standard conditions and that you meet the eligibility criteria then you would be provided a permit. This effectively can be done instantaneously, so it really does not provide any delays; it just lets it go through. What the bill is proposing to do is to just ensure that process can continue.

**Ms DOOLEY:** What mechanisms are in place to review or appeal decisions made by the electronic decision-making process?

**Mr Lloyd:** Again, the bill maintains the existing review rights which are under both legislative frameworks—the Environmental Protection Act and the Nature Conservation Act. There is no change to any review rights which exist under both of those frameworks. In terms of the Environmental Protection Act, currently those standard environmental authorities are subject to judicial review. That has not changed as part of this, if there is an issue that can be reviewed. In section 173O of the Nature Conservation Act there is extended standing under the Judicial Review Act. The bill does not alter the arrangements; it effectively provides that any decision by the system is a decision by the chief executive, so it maintains those same review and appeal rights.

If anything was provided on the basis of an error, material fact or one of those sorts of things—there is an obligation on a person when they are entering their information into the system to ensure it is true and correct, that it is not false and misleading. There are those sorts of provisions in both acts. In terms of any engagement with the legislative framework, those requirements apply there. Under the Judicial Review Act, if it was granted on an error of law then it would not be a valid permit. There are those abilities to review as you go through.

**Ms DOOLEY:** Lastly, are there plans to evaluate how effective it has been, obviously once the legislation has gone through?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of annual approvals or annual authorities under the Nature Conservation Act which go through a process like this, it is 25 to 30 a day in terms of those standard pet-keeping licences. It is pretty straightforward and quick. With anything, it is always good to review how we are using our systems and make sure they are contemporary and meeting our requirements. The legislation puts an obligation on the chief executive to make sure that any system which is being used is compliant with the act. That is a factor the chief executive needs to consider in authorising an electronic system to be used. As part of that process, there is an ongoing obligation for the chief executive to make sure they are meeting the requirements of the act.

**Ms DOOLEY:** Anybody can fill in a form and tell you what you want to know. Are there spot checks done? Will you visit Mr Joe Bloggs down on the Gold Coast who says he has five blue-tongue lizards to check that they are being kept as they have stated, that they are going to look after them?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of a general approach to compliance, the department has these conditions, or those conditions are in force, so they are enforceable. If we became aware of an issue, we could look at it and investigate. Both the environmental services regulation division, in terms of our environmental authorities, and Ben's division, looking after the implementation aspects for the wildlife permitting framework in particular, would have mechanisms in place to deal with that when they do become aware of issues. These are the lower risk activities which we are looking through in terms of those ones which are going through that automatic issuing process. We would be looking at compliance when those issues emerge.

**Ms DOOLEY:** Does the system have a red-flag system embedded in that?

**Mr Lloyd:** I think any of the higher risk activities would be subject to that site-specific assessment. This allows those kinds of resources to be focused on the most important aspect, or the higher risk activities, when you are undertaking assessment. That is the intent behind the bill. Those standard ones still need to be regulated and have those requirements in place because it is important to know where the activities are or who has 10 blue-tongue lizards and those sorts of things. It is important to know where they are so that if we become aware of issues we can investigate and resolve those. Ben, was there something else that you were going to cover?

**Mr Klaassen:** I think you have covered it. Our compliance efforts are focused to the higher risk licences—where someone may be keeping venomous snakes, for instance, and we want to make sure they have an appropriate regime in place for how they are looked after and they are not roaming around. We do spot checks occasionally. We get a lot of information from members of the public on issues they see, so we follow up on those. We have officers right across the state who go out and do checks and ensure compliance with the law. It is a rigorous framework.

**Ms BOLTON:** When the automated process is set up, is what is currently determined low risk just transitioned across? Who determines low risk?

**Mr Lloyd:** The regulation itself—we have provided a draft version of what that looks like—has three types of licences under the Nature Conservation Act that we are suggesting would continue to be automatically issued. They are the standard licence, the specialised licence and the advanced licence for those ones other than the dangerous or venomous kind of aspects. Since 2017 the department has been automatically granting authorities for individuals, hobbyists and businesses to keep, breed and trade captive-bred native animals as pets for a hobby or business.

There are those three licence types that I mentioned under the Nature Conservation Act for keeping track of captive-bred native animals. Standard licences are for keeping a small number of protected animals as pets, up to 10 in total, including certain birds, amphibians, non-dangerous snakes and reptiles. Specialised licences are for a collection of native animals as pets or for a hobby and again include certain birds, amphibians, non-dangerous snakes and reptiles—up to 50 in total. Advanced licences allow the keeping and trading of an unlimited number of animals as pets, a hobby or a business. Things like pet shops or those specialising in the trade of captive-bred native animals would operate there. Those will continue to be automatically issued for activities involving those ones.

There are three where we have moved away from automatic issuing. Those are a rehabilitation permit, a damage mitigation permit and a dealer licence. In the past we have issued those through an automatic process—250 to 300 of those licences. In terms of designing the regulatory framework for those, a little bit more time is needed to think through what criteria you would put into a regulation around those things.

**Ms BOLTON:** Has there ever been something classified as low risk that has been rejected—as in the application?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of the system itself, if you are going through an application process and it flags an issue—for example, you need to be a suitable person to receive a licence or an authority; one of the factors would be if there is a relevant conviction. If you ticked the box that you had a conviction, it would shoot you out of the automatic process and put you into a process where it would need to be considered by the chief executive or a delegate as part of that process.

**Ms BOLTON:** There has not been an instance where it has not automatically shot it out but in looking at it—not automated—it was deemed it would have to be rejected?

**Mr Lloyd:** It would need to be decided by a person as part of that process, I think.

**Ms BOLTON:** You mentioned camping permits.

**Mr Lloyd:** Yes. There is a framework for camping permits already under the regulatory framework. We are making changes to the primary act around the Nature Conservation Act to set up the appropriate head of power for an automatic system to be used. Under the regulation there is already the ability for those permits to be granted automatically, but because there are changes to the primary act we need to make consequential amendments to the relevant regulation for the camping permits to allow those to continue.

**Ms BOLTON:** When that occurs, will it take into account efforts taken against those who are infringing in our national parks and will they be rejected? I have some concerns, because of the information sharing between QPS and QPWS, that we end up with a system that cannot identify those who have already been doing the wrong thing in national parks.

**Mr Lloyd:** The bill makes no change to the camping permit booking system. It is just maintaining what it currently is.

**Dr O'SHEA:** Thank you very much for your presentation and for preparing for today. Are there any changes proposed by this bill that do not reflect current departmental practice?

**Mr Lloyd:** No.

**Dr O'SHEA:** The member for Noosa might have covered this, but when reviewing departmental practices were there any changes made to the automatic granting of authorities for any particular activity?

**Mr Lloyd:** As I mentioned in the previous answer to the member for Noosa, we have undertaken a review of those permits which were being automatically issued and the department has at this stage decided that we would not continue with three types of permits which were being automatically granted. Ben, did you want to provide any more detail on that?

**Mr Klaassen:** Effective from last week, we have moved those three permit types to an in-person assessment. They will still apply online through the system, but then an actual person will assess the application given there is a slightly higher risk and some criteria that need to be formally considered by a person. That process has effectively started, as of last week.

**Dr O'SHEA:** It has been a good exercise even doing that. Can you explain the ambiguity that currently exists around offence provisions relating to EPOs, direction notices and clean-up and the ability to issue infringement notices?

**Mr Lloyd:** The amendments that were made to the Environmental Protection Act 2024 wrapped those three former enforcement notices into the environmental enforcement order, but the transitional provisions kept alive any of those clean-up notices, direction notices and EPOs. It kept alive those relevant compliance orders. An issue we have identified since that legislation commenced is around the ability to continue to issue a penalty infringement notice. The orders themselves continue; they are still in force. The transitional provision specified that it could still be enforced by way of a proceeding. It has really just put it beyond doubt. A penalty infringement notice could potentially still be issued for those types of notices which are there.

**Mr LEE:** The explanatory notes to the legislation refer to practical implementation through the subordinate legislation. You have given us an exposure draft of the regulation. When will that be tabled in parliament? What is the timeline on that?

**Mr Lloyd:** That will be a matter for the minister and government once the bill has progressed through. The intent is that those regulatory changes would commence at the same time the bill commences. As one of the commencement provisions suggests, it would be within 28 days after the bill has been assented to. The intent would be that the regulation aligns and that they both commence at the same time.

**Mr LEE:** I understand the EEOs have been in operation since 2017 for the standard licence applications. What I am interested in is: why now? It has been going for eight years. Has it been raised as a matter of concern? Have there been problems that the legislation is proposing to address?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of the Environmental Protection Act, in 2012, when the legislation was passed, it set up the standard environmental authority process and it was almost anticipated that it would be an automatic issuing at that time. The legislation itself has not kept up with contemporary drafting styles around how electronic systems are used. That is one of the main drivers. It is just putting it beyond doubt that a system can be used for that.

**Mr LEE:** In terms of the implementation of the system—and where I am going is an evaluation for the potential for abuse or misuse—is there any truth-telling? Do you have some sort of spot audit process—you mentioned red flags—to verify the accuracy on a sampling basis?



**Mr Lloyd:** Under both acts there are offences relating to false and misleading information. If the information has been provided and it is not true and correct then there would be potentially an avenue there. I might see if Ben wants to add anything extra in terms of the compliance approach of the Nature Conservation Act. Then Jackie may want to talk a little bit about what we do under the Environmental Protection Act.

**Mr Klaassen:** The vast majority of the licences or authorities that get issued are for someone buying a captive-bred animal from a pet shop. There is a process that is in place. They are very low risk, so there is really minimal compliance that is required. As I alluded to earlier, we have a targeted compliance approach for those higher risk activities to assure what they say they have in place in terms of animal husbandry or information that we need to have around compliance. We do spot checks on that. If we have received information from the public or from other sources, we follow up on that. We have a regular process in place to make sure that people are complying with requirements under the Nature Conservation Act. There are regular matters that we deal with and we issue other infringement notices or remind people of what their obligations are. There is a robust process.

**Mr LEE:** The explanatory notes to the legislation refer to best practice. Can you identify where that originates from or what is the source of that best practice?

**Mr Lloyd:** When we were looking at automatic approval processes or automatic systems and electronic systems and how they interact together, we did a bit of a literature review around various jurisdictions. One was the Commonwealth Ombudsman, which has looked into automatic issuing of processes. It really picks up some best practice arrangements out of it—things like how to ensure it is appropriately drafted in a way where there is no mental engagement necessary if there is an automatic system being used. Effectively, the framework sets up the criteria that needs to be met and then if you can meet that then there is an obligation to provide those. That was the aspect we were looking at as part of this process. In terms of best practice, it is bringing it up to the contemporary standards of how systems are being used and how we engage with both industry and the public around these things.

**Mr LEE:** Obviously, these processes are subject to continuous quality improvement. Aside from the legislation potentially changing in the future, do you see any amendments or changes to ensure the electronic approval system is fit for purpose on an ongoing basis?

**Mr Lloyd:** I think it is always important to keep up an ongoing review to make sure our frameworks are contemporary and fit for purpose and meeting community expectations and standards. In terms of the Nature Conservation Act, the types of authorities that could be automatically issued will be prescribed under the regulation. For the standard environmental authorities under the Environmental Protection Act, those lists are put in the regulation as well. As part of those processes there is, under the Legislative Standards Act, a requirement to do a sunset review every 10 years. There would at least be, as part of that process, a requirement to review what is happening in that space. That is the legislative minimum. What the department does on top of that is ensure our frameworks are fit for purpose and raising issues if there are any that emerge.

**CHAIR:** I am curious about the online system that is in place now. I am assuming that technology is already there in other forms with other departments and part of the standard landscape of systems that Queensland government has. Would that be fair to assume?

**Mr Lloyd:** In terms of the regulator side that administers the framework, Ben could talk through the system for the Nature Conservation Act and then Jackie could talk through what we use in the Environmental Protection Act, just to give you a bit more context on those things.

**CHAIR:** It is really about the platforms and how they work. Are there multiple verification processes? Do you get text messages with numbers and codes? How does it work?

**Ms McKeay:** I think our systems are fairly modern in nature in that we use a Microsoft platform. Microsoft is the software provider and we use a system called Dynamics, which is readily used by a range of government agencies across Australia. Within those systems there are a number of different authentication processes that operators would have to use, as well as internal staff, to protect against data breaches and that kind of thing. The system itself has been in place for about five years. As with any system there are regular investments and enhancements to those systems over time.

**CHAIR:** As we have no more questions and we have been running a little bit behind, I might bring this public briefing to a close. Thank you to everyone who has participated today. Thank you to our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. There were no questions on notice. I declare this public briefing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 11.16 am.**