



Speech by

DIANNE REILLY

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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WEAPONS AMENDMENT REGULATION [No. 1] 2001

Mrs REILLY (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (4.30 p.m.): I rise to oppose this motion to disallow the weapons amendment regulation. I had not planned or intended to speak on this matter, but my ire and my emotions have been raised by some of the rubbish I have heard from those on the opposition benches. As a result, I felt that I must make some response. I firstly want to put to rest the misconception that I am sure is rife amongst members on the benches opposite that members of the government have no sympathy, understanding or compassion for Queensland's landowners, farmers or indeed recreational pistol shooters. I can tell them that that is not true. That is not what this is all about. I will give the House an example which explains why I understand the plight of those living in rural Queensland. I grew up on a chicken farm and learnt to handle a gun. I will wager that I can handle a gun better than anyone on the opposition benches, and more varieties of guns at that. But I have never held a gun or managed—

An opposition member: That's a big call.

Mrs REILLY: That was just in case those opposite wanted to challenge me at some point to a competition. However, I have never handled a gun as an adult and nor will I, because having become an adult I made the conscious decision that despite my background, my knowledge, my experience and my ability with guns I despised them, I hate them and will never, ever bring myself down to that level again.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs REILLY: I was a state level competition pistol shooter and can handle a number of air rifles and shotguns, so just remember that. I do not mean to make light of this—I really do not—because I am very emotional about this issue. For my entire childhood my father was a chicken farmer. We grew up on acreage just outside of Brisbane where it was not unusual to hear the sounds of gunshots throughout the street, although I dare say that my father and my family were the only people living in that area that had the need for guns. My father is and always has been one of the most hardworking people I have ever seen or am yet to meet. We raised 30,000 chickens at a time in two large commercial sheds, chickens that members have probably eaten for lunch and dinner every day of their lives.

However, I can tell members that it is pretty devastating that, when scratching out a meagre existence from amongst piles of chicken manure, people allowed their pets or dogs to stray and mix with feral animals that lived on council and state land nearby. Apart from battling snakes, rats, mice and other plagues, my father had to deal with stray cats and dogs coming into the shed. When one tries to grow 30,000 chickens for a business and 10,000 of those are shocked into sudden death because a dog entered the shed in an attempt to catch one or two in its mouth, if it can, it is pretty devastating. I will not forget memories of being 10 years old and staying up all night with my father to collect those dead chickens and bury them without the aid of a forklift or any support from the neighbours. They did not come and say, 'Sorry, that was our dog that caused you to almost lose your livelihood.'

I will also not forget the tears that my father had in his eyes when he had to shoot those animals and take them back to their owners and say, 'I'm sorry I had to shoot your child's pet, but you should have kept it at home and not let it run rampant through my chicken sheds and potentially kill off my livelihood.' I grew up in an environment where my father was vilified, pilloried and hated throughout the area and treated like a monster by his neighbours because he was trying to survive. I thank God

that I have never seen the damage a gun can do to a human being, but I have seen the damage it can do to an animal, and it is not pretty.

Members opposite also spoke of the agony of farmers who have to destroy livestock ravaged by dogs and feral beasts, and I feel for them; I honestly do. However, what about the agony of a mother whose 12-year-old son did not come home from an early morning pig shooting expedition in northern New South Wales? Why didn't he come home? He went on these pig shooting expeditions regularly. After all, they were just fun that rural farmers thought might give them another opportunity to practise their shooting. He did not come home because his father shot him dead that morning. It was an accident. It was something that I would not wish to see happen to any family. I remember Marcel as a 12-year-old boy. He was a gentle child who probably would never have picked up a gun himself, but he went pig shooting with his dad just to see what it was like. They did not shoot a pig that day. They only shot Marcel.

I have also heard from members opposite that guns do not kill people, that people do. I am sick to death of hearing this piece of absolute garbage. I will tell members why guns should be controlled and why they should be limited to people who are responsible enough to use them. Guns can cause more carnage in a single moment than any knife-wielding maniac or any bottle of poison. How many people run through McDonald's, banks or their former workplaces waving a bottle of poison or a bowie knife in their hand and kill 10, 12, 20 or 30 people? Not that many! But if a gun is handy and a lunatic can get hold of it, that is the weapon they will use. That will be the weapon of their choice. Let us limit guns to those who can prove that they are responsible and law-abiding citizens.

Self-defence is also no argument for keeping a gun. It is not a valid argument at all. A person keeping a gun in their home to defend themselves from a would-be intruder or a burglar surely guarantees that, if their house is indeed broken into, they will have unwittingly provided a weapon for that criminal to use against them, their family or their neighbours. In case members opposite think I do not have sympathy for competition shooters, my brother-in-law is an international competition rifle shooter. He has qualified for the Commonwealth Games in the past. He has absolutely no problem meeting Victorian and New South Wales licensing regulations in relation to managing and keeping his guns and continuing his pastime, which gives him pleasure and joy, because he is more than happy to prove that he is competent, law abiding, can meet the licensing requirements and pay what is required. We are not asking too much of licensed and law-abiding gun owners other than that they pay a minimal fee and that they continue to demonstrate their commitment to being worthy of holding that licence. I oppose the motion.
