



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH**

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Hansard 17 October 2001

**ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION BILL**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (4.14 p.m.): Having read this Animal Care and Protection Bill, I can only conclude that it would be our philosophical view as to where we fit into the scheme of the universe which would have anyone not recognising the true intent of the bill. The vast majority of us value our animals and take seriously our responsibilities in providing them with the care for which they rely on us. Unfortunately, as in all aspects of life, there are those who either do not recognise cruelty or are insensitive to it.

My major concerns in reading the bill were that rural Queenslanders would be negatively affected by this bill and the possibility of incurring greater costs in adhering to the bill. As has been expressed by other speakers in this House, many of these concerns have been addressed, and a realistic approach to handling all situations between all parties is a must. Those who do abuse their livestock are a rarity, and I think all members of this House would agree that most rural producers know the value of their animals and are often accused by their family members of caring for their stock more than they do the family itself.

The situation concerning droughts has been addressed by other members, and I will not go over that again except to say that such times are extremely painful and difficult for animal and man alike, and I trust that the seriousness of those times will be viewed with compassion. It is a time when governments are called on to help in various ways, and recognising these conditions early enough will aid in minimising sometimes tragic results. I ask the minister not to be too slow in implementation measures to alleviate these situations.

Many people who find themselves wanting to experience the rural existence are often unaware as to the true holding capacity of a small rural five-acre block and they overstock their small blocks alarmingly. This can often bring animal welfare organisers knocking on their door. There needs to be a certain amount of education for people from urban areas who wish this rural experience when stocking these very small areas. I often find it interesting that we find it acceptable to mutilate ourselves in various ways, and not only say it is our right to do so but we all abhor cruelty to animals. I often wonder why we cannot respect and value ourselves as much.

I have found no mention made of people breeding genetic defects in animals in the hope that these animals would be more appealing in some way—cuter in some way. I would have thought for some animals this is a cruelty in itself. Unfortunately, the RSPCA is the recipient of many an unwanted gift and often receives the poor animals whose owners find that these animals become an obstacle to their living their lives. Too many people do not realise that animals are a lot of work, and they should be adequately briefed before they are allowed to own a pet.

My experience is that most people love and respect the rights of animals and birds to live and appreciate all that they have to offer us in beauty and companionship. My husband and I are often called on by the RSPCA to care for carnivorous birds, not only to nurse them back to health but to release them back into the wild. The increasing call on our time reflects the growing concern of people in general for all animals and birds.

One of my major bones of contention is the feral cat and cats that are allowed to roam at night. Owners of these should ensure that their pets are controlled, as the damage they do can be laid fairly and squarely at the feet of these irresponsible owners. Animal control and animal care and protection go hand in hand, as mentioned by the member for Mackay.

A further concern for me was the effect of many fundraising events and how this legislation would affect them. Often the sole function for very small communities is the one and only annual rodeo. I believe the member for Darling Downs covered this adequately, and I will not repeat the many issues he brought up. But I agree with what he said. There are various arguments that he put forward that could alleviate many of the real or perceived cruelties. The member also addressed the issues of dingoes and domestic dogs gone wild. To see these animals tearing the throats out of sheep and mauling calves and other livestock is horrific, and controls should not be minimised where these animals are concerned. They should be more humane, but not minimised.

Again, in all aspects of animal welfare, it is necessary to evaluate all forms of control, transportation and living conditions. I found the intent of this bill easy to support, but ask the minister to be careful when condemning rural practices of any sort that are sometimes misunderstood by urban communities. I often equate the lack of understanding between these two very different lifestyles with a person who watches professional wrestling for the first time; it can look really painful, but on closer inspection it is found in most cases not to be so.

There have been some very negative incidents involving the RSPCA. The member for Darling Downs mentioned one very widely known event that occurred in my electorate. But it is not an isolated one. I have had various concerns brought to my office relating to what is often described as a victimisation of a particular individual. I ask that care be taken that all actions by the enforcers of this bill, the RSPCA, be real and not perceived. Their accountability in these cases is essential. I support this bill.

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