



Speech by

JAN JARRATT

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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WHITSUNDAY FAUNA RESCUE

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (7.27 p.m.): Members of this House from time to time take the opportunity to recognise the valuable work undertaken by volunteers in our communities. We know that there are many wonderful people in every part of this state who give of their time to make this a better world in which to live. The volunteers from Fauna Rescue in the Whitsundays are just such people. Fauna Rescue of Queensland is an incorporated body that is devoted to caring for Queensland's wildlife. The 80-odd members of this group from the Whitsundays are dedicated to the care of sick, injured or orphaned birds and animals, with the ultimate aim of their release back to the wild.

These are an amazing bunch of people who can often be recognised by the oversized shoulder bags they take everywhere with them. Closer inspection will usually reveal that the bag is not for shopping but contains a small hairless animal that needs to be fed every few hours. The animals are certainly cute and there must be a great deal of satisfaction in saving the life of these little critters, but all I can think of is the sleep deprivation brought on by the relentless feeding schedule that takes priority over life both day and night. It is not unusual for one person to be caring for up to 14 animals simultaneously as one of their members, Judith, is at present. This is an enormous commitment. It has been said that joey raisers have the tendencies to be obsessional insomniacs, slightly masochistic, and have great emotional resilience. I am not sure if this is true, but they are certainly dedicated people who deserve the gratitude of the whole community.

The group not only handfeeds orphaned animals but also care for older sick and injured animals. To do this they have to provide suitable pens and enclosures to keep predators like cats away. In fact, cats represent one of the major threats to our wildlife and not only because they are ferocious predators but because they spread disease. Cats are carriers of toxoplasmosis, a disease deadly to many native animals. Animals contract the disease through contact with infected faeces and, unless treated very quickly, will usually die a horrible death. Toxoplasmosis poses a particularly serious threat to the Proserpine rock wallaby, an endangered species that is known to exist only in small pockets of vine scrub in the Whitsunday region. It would be a huge tragedy if these precious macropods faced extinction through a preventable cause.

Like members of Fauna Rescue, I appeal to all cat owners to ensure that their animals are not free to hunt our native animals and to spread disease that becomes a silent killer. The Whitsunday Fauna Rescue group is fortunate to have a close working relationship with local Queensland Parks and Wildlife officers, who assist them in all facets of their work with animals. Being an animal carer is a tough but rewarding job and I want to congratulate every member of the Fauna Rescue of Queensland Association on their dedication and commitment to our native wildlife. Our community salutes them. Mr Speaker, may I take the opportunity to say what a privilege it is to be one of the last speakers from the government on this historic occasion of the first sitting of the parliament outside of our capital city.