



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Tuesday, 19 October 2004

NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.50 p.m.): I rise to support the Natural Resources Legislation Amendment Bill. According to Planet Ark, Australia has been invaded by 90 species of animals since white settlement. It is hard to understand why anyone would keep pronounced pest animals, but apparently lots of people do otherwise this amendment bill would not be necessary.

We all know what damage the rabbit did to Australia and the enormous amount of money and effort required in bringing it under control. Feral pigs, the European red fox and other introduced species kill native wildlife and farm animals and are a continual threat to farmers' livelihoods. Land degradation from animal pests and introduced plants cost Australia dearly in money and resources.

From time to time I have seen programs or news items on television about very odd pets that are kept in suburban situations. I know that recently there was an item about a man who kept a lion in an apartment. I think he was in New York. I am also aware of a woman who once kept wolves in the backyard of a small house in London. While I really hope that nobody in Queensland is keeping a lion or a wolf in their house or on their country property, there will no doubt be many who are keeping animals that they should not have. I heard this morning on the radio that a man came in with eggs from another country and he had them in his undies.

The worst possible thing people could do is dump them in the wild to avoid prosecution. My concerns about pest animals being released into the environment extends to fish and other marine species. Minister Robertson has referred to the discovery in the north of Brisbane of the red-eared slider turtle. That is a major pest that may have been kept as a pet.

I can only begin to imagine the consequences if the voracious South American piranha was released into our waterways and how terribly hard it would be to bring it under control. The fallout from such a dangerous, exotic fish species finding its way into Australia's rivers and streams is too terrible to contemplate.

I do support an amnesty period that will enable people keeping animals illegally to turn them over to authorities without the fear of action being taken against them. The firearm amnesty was successful; so, too, should be an amnesty on the illegal possession of potentially invasive exotic pests. Australia has borne the brunt of exotic pest invasions. It is vital that everything possible is done to minimise future harmful impacts. I commend the bill to the House.