



Speech by

Ray Hopper

MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS

Hansard Wednesday, 1 November 2006

NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOPPER (Darling Downs—NPA) (9.23 pm): I rise to speak to this bill. I have heard a lot of very interesting stories in this chamber. I notice that, when we go into the dining room and have our dinner, all the members opposite eat meat. Have the members ever been on a tour of an abattoir and watched a bullock get killed? Have they seen the pressure that those cattle are put under before they run up the race and are knocked? Man has to live and survive. We have to face the realities of life. This bill is not about the realities of life; this bill is about a tradition that has been handed down through generation after generation in this nation. This government is taking that tradition away from us. It is just another little grab by this government.

What will be next? We have heard members mention fishing. We have heard members mention things that absolutely intrude on our rights. I used to shoot roos for a living. Let me tell members that I was possibly one of the most humane shooters they will ever meet. I never pulled the trigger of my rifle without making sure that I could kill a kangaroo in a humane manner. I have never shot for fun.

Prior to my election I was also a dogger for the Wambo shire. For those who do not know what a dogger is, a dogger is a person who goes out and traps and shoots wild dogs. That has to occur because of what those animals can do to a cow that is calving.

Government members interjected.

Mr HOPPER: It is the same thing. It is about taking a life. It has absolutely everything to do with this bill. Nature looks after itself. I have seen dogs pull the tongue out of a calf as it was being born. That calf is then born without a tongue. The point I am making is that it was very easy to kill a wild dog. I have seen what has happened to crops after a mob of ducks have come in overnight. The ducks have bitten off the little green shoots of wheat and then dug up the seed so that no wheat can be grown. The ducks destroy the crop. I know that we have plans in place where a property owner can cull these animals or birds in such a situation.

The point I make is that, after the duck shooters have gone, we will still have fewer ducks. Earlier I heard a member say that, since duck shooting has been banned in New South Wales, the duck population in that state has decreased. I admit that that could be because of drought. We have had 10 to 12 years of drought. Earlier we heard the member for Gregory speak about the population of wild birds because of the drought. The rains will come again and these birds will repopulate.

This bill takes away our rights. I have had constituents come to my office and talk about duck shooting. They do not take many ducks at all. They live for their weekends away where, as a family, they go duck shooting. They have retriever dogs for which they have paid a lot of money. Duck shooting is a sport and a tradition. I can see the minister shaking her head. What does she do when she finds a mouse in her house? Does the minister chase the mouse out the door? No, the minister sets a trap.

Ms Nelson-Carr: I make a pet of them.

Mr HOPPER: Does the minister feed him and give him a drink? It is exactly the same thing. This is what life is about. Duck shooting is a tradition that is being taken away from us. Earlier we heard the

shadow minister for primary industries speak to a motion that he moved that related to fishing. What is next in line? We should be able to do these things in this nation. Our rights should be protected. The United States protects the rights of its people.

This bill relates to a tradition that has been passed on. It is an erosion of our rights. I simply refuse to accept it. We heard the member for Charters Towers talk about the bats in Charters Towers. I have to say that I am very disappointed that the minister for the environment has allowed those bats to stay in Charters Towers because they are not in their natural environment. We have talked about being cruel to ducks, yet this bat colony is not living in its natural environment. It is living in trees that were imported into the area. They were planted by human beings. Those trees are not the bats' natural environment. Those bats should be shifted to an environment to which they are suited. But, no, the minister will not consider that. She will let the bats stay there. Yet she has forced this legislation onto us—legislation which erodes another rural right. That is exactly what this is.

Earlier tonight the member for Gregory spoke about putting water across Australia. Do members realise what Australia was like before white man came here? The white man put water across Australia. He put the infrastructure in place so that we have more roos, we have more ducks and we have more of everything else. It is simply unacceptable that this legislation is passed, as it erodes the rights of the few duck shooters of Queensland. That is exactly what this bill is about.