



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (5.24 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the Nature Conservation Amendment Bill and to support our shadow minister. I make the observation that this piece of legislation has nothing to do with the conservation of duck and quail in Queensland. Not one extra duck or quail will be protected by the passage of this bill. This bill has put the 'con' back into conservation.

In August 2005, the Premier announced that the duck and quail conservation plan would not continue after its expiry date in September 2005. This announcement effectively ended recreational duck and quail hunting in Queensland. That is it: there is no more duck and quail hunting, so this legislation is completely superfluous. If members opposite were to be honest, they would recognise that fact. We could be using the time of this place in a more valuable manner. Water infrastructure, health and policing are issues we should be discussing.

The unfortunate aspect of this bill is that it is not about conservation; it is more about an ideology. It is not about sustainability or biodiversity of species. It is not based on science. It is all wrapped up in emotion. It is centred on the principle of cruelty. If this legislation is passed, then the next group of people who will be in the sights of the people who instigated this document will be the fishers. In another six to 12 months I can hear a Labor member of this House giving us a blow by blow account of how cruel it is to catch and kill a fish—putting live baits on a steel hook, piercing the fish with a cruelly sharpened barb, dragging it to the surface, and letting it slowly and silently flop around on the deck while it struggles and its little mouth opens and closes.

I am waiting for the minister for the environment to stand up in this place and say, 'Fishing is not an appropriate activity in contemporary life in the Smart State.' That will happen if we continue down this road. It is a very dangerous road to go down. If we listen to the member for Indooroopilly, we will not kill another animal because it is cruel.

Most of the people opposed to this legislation would be opposed to the principle of eating meat—that to kill another animal for our sustenance is a very bad thing. Many would be vegetarians who make an in-principle stand to oppose cruelty and the eating of meat, and I appreciate that. However, the reality is that being a human and surviving in this world means that we have to consume another life force, whether that be animal or plant. We cannot photosynthesise. We cannot stand with our arms out and turn sunlight into energy.

I think modern humans who live in cities in particular are out of touch with the reality of the cycle of life and death. If we are to make a decision to ban duck and quail hunting solely on the basis of cruelty, then members should try calculating the level of cruelty that went into their last meal. They should try calculating the level of cruelty that went into the meal that they gave to their children or that they shared with their family. Members opposite are trying to stop the right of many Queenslanders—my right included—to eat wild harvested duck and quail.

My early experience of eating ducks was when I was growing up on a quarter-acre block at South Kolan when there was no such thing as Kentucky Fried Chicken or McDonalds. We had a chook house down the back. Dad grew some potatoes, corn and pumpkin. We were poor. We had to do it tough. He was

a canecutter. As a treat on a Sunday we would eat duck. We would go down the back and see the ducks. Dad would grab a duck or two and maybe a chook. He would put them on the chopping block and get this big cruel axe and chop their heads off. Then the chooks would run around. The kids would stand there, look at them and think, 'Wow.' Then we would go and get the chook or ducks, put them in a bucket of hot water, pluck them and tear the gizzards out. We would probably save the gizzards to use as bait when we went fishing, which was a great pastime. Then my mother would mix in those home-grown potatoes with that duck, put some seasoning on it and we would have the best feed of our lives. That is what we did on a Sunday evening.

We were not sheltered from the reality of the cycle of life and death that many people and many children are sheltered from. It appears to me that the people who proposed this bill think that there is another world out there for ducks. When the duckie gets sick, the little duckie ambulance will come along and give the duckie a pat on the back and say, 'Bye-bye, you're off to duckie heaven.' The reality is that there is cruelty in nature. If a duck does not die from lead shot or being shot by a shotgun, the only other future that that duck has is to die a horrible death by being ripped apart by some predator.