



Speech by

Ronan Lee

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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NATURE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LEE (Indooroopilly—ALP) (4.09 pm): I begin by saying how delighted I am to rise in the House today to support this wonderful piece of legislation. At the very beginning of my speech I say very clearly and firmly that I completely disagree with the member for Burdekin. I think that the EPA does an absolutely wonderful job. I think the EPA does great work for Queensland and for Queenslanders. I think it does wonderful work looking after our national parks, wildlife and flora.

I am disturbed by the tone of the comments made by the member for Burdekin, who seemed to have a really offhand manner when it came to talking about the EPA. These are people who are committed to the work they do. They do great work for Queensland. I do not think for one minute that we should allow anyone to come in here and denigrate the wonderful work that these fine people do for our state. Certainly the first 20 minutes of the speech by the member for Burdekin that I just listened to could well have been delivered in this place by the member for Tablelands. It was that sort of conspiratorial, 'No-one talks to us, we're simply not consulted, no-one listens to the things we have to say. We are the real people who know what is going on in the world but nobody listens to us.'

I am not going to speak here for an hour and base my speech on the science of Dr Webb. It was interesting to listen to the member for Burdekin. She dismissed every piece of research available from Australian government sources, the RSPCA and interstate government bodies that looked at things like wounding rates and damage mitigation permits. Anything that was looked at by the member for Burdekin was dismissed in favour of the charlatan's advice that was being handed to her by Dr Webb, who is clearly something of a hero in the member for Burdekin's electorate when it comes to environmental and scientific matters. I would not put any stock in his views.

It is obvious, member for Burdekin, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that there are significant concerns about wounding rates when ducks are shot at. I have spoken in the House before in great detail about the pattern of the pellets that form when someone shoots, and I do not want to do it again today. We know that when someone fires at a duck it is a moving target. There are significant concerns that the duck will be hit in the wing or the foot. You might be lucky, member for Burdekin, and actually hit the duck in the head and have a clean kill. But all the evidence, not the hearsay and the rubbish that the member for Burdekin presented to us today, suggests that there are significant concerns with wounding rates. Up to 90 per cent of the birds that are shot at are wounded, not killed. It is a very, very serious concern.

I do not believe it is in any way appropriate to caricature people in the community or members of this parliament who believe that shooting at ducks for fun is a problem, a concern, and that they should be banned as 'green radicals', as the member for Burdekin suggested. I ask members of this parliament: what is so radical about having a problem with animal cruelty? This is the shadow environment minister suggesting that if someone is concerned about cruelty to birds they are some sort of radical. I think it makes us part of the mainstream. I think the person who is being radical and who is way out on the fringe of this debate is the member for Burdekin.

There are significant concerns in the community about the cruelty of the sporting shooting of ducks and quail. I find it very concerning that the member for Burdekin would believe that someone is a radical if

they are concerned about animal welfare. It goes to show, though, how far the National Party really is from the values of mainstream Queenslanders. Having listened to the member's speech, I could only imagine what a hoot National Party meetings are these days; they must be a real riot. But the National Party is way off when it comes to understanding the values and the views of mainstream Queensland. The views expressed by the member for Burdekin are really on the fringe. They are certainly not the values of my constituency. I would bet every last cent I have that they are not the views of Queenslanders as a whole.

I have absolutely great news for the member for Burdekin. I listened to, and heard, her impassioned concern about those shooters who were constructing nesting boxes and doing what I thought seemed to be really wonderful work in maintaining wetlands in her electorate. I have really great news, and I hope I am not stealing the thunder of the minister or the EPA. Those people can still do that work. What a wonderful announcement for the parliament today. The member for Burdekin can take this message back to her constituents: they can still do great work for animal welfare by constructing nesting boxes. They can still do the work that the member for Burdekin said they were doing in the wetlands in the member's electorate, but they cannot shoot at the little critters for fun. That is great news. The member for Burdekin can take that back to her constituents.

I say to the member for Burdekin that I am happy to go and visit her electorate and actually see firsthand the work that she said was being done. I want to actually see the work that the shooters from her electorate were doing. I suggest to the member for Burdekin that we should talk outside the chamber and arrange an appropriate time for me to come to her electorate and see this work firsthand.

Mrs Sullivan interjected.

Mr LEE: I want to be there. I take that interjection from the member for Pumicestone; she is happy to drive me there. The two of us will visit the electorate of the member for Burdekin. I want to see the great work that is being done there, and I want the member for Burdekin to encourage her constituents to continue that work.

I want to refute completely the basis of the argument put forward by the member for Burdekin that if someone shoots ducks they are actually doing the right thing and being a conservationist. That is the crux of the argument that has been put by the member for Burdekin. 'We have to kill them to love them' was the guts of the argument. The more someone shoots them, the more they must really love them. It is like the old Monty Python saying, 'This is hurting me more than it is hurting you.' As the school master bashes the child he says, 'This is hurting me more than it is hurting you.' It is absolutely stupid to suggest that if you are someone who wants to shoot ducks for fun you are a true conservationist. I do not know where the member for Burdekin got this idea from, but it seems absolutely ludicrous to me.

I was stunned by the obvious statement the member for Burdekin made when she said that duck shooters are often the first people to notice changes in local duck populations. What an absolute cracker! Of course they are the first people to notice changes in duck populations: they are the ones shooting them! They are the ones taking aim, albeit sometimes not well, and shooting at these poor little critters. Of course they notice changes in population before other people do.

I am delighted that this bill is before parliament. It is a great piece of legislation. I think it will do some wonderful work and make it clear to Queenslanders how serious we are about things such as this. It is very important, I think as a point of principle, that we do not encourage people to shoot and kill creatures for fun. As a point of principle, I think it is something that is immensely important. This is nothing to do with sustainable agriculture. It is nothing to do with sustainable resource management. This is worth thinking about. It is a piece of legislation which says that shooting birds for kicks is not something that is real crash hot to do in this day and age. I am thrilled to support this piece of legislation.

I have spoken in the House many times previously regarding how strongly I feel about this issue, but today I want to thank the tens of thousands of Queenslanders who actually joined this campaign and gave voice to Queensland's ducks and quail. I want to thank the people who signed electronic petitions. I want to thank the people who signed paper petitions. I want to thank the people who wrote letters to their members of parliament and who signed and returned those wonderful postcards that I think all members of parliament received. I also want to thank those people who organised information stalls and toured the state, going from regional centre to regional centre and city to city, talking about how important this issue was. I think they have done wonderful work, and they will feel great when this piece of legislation is passed by this parliament, hopefully, today.

In particular, I want to place on record my sincere gratitude and thanks to various people, beginning with Des Boyland and his team at the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland. They did great work to organise this campaign. Mark Townsend and Kerry Cutting from the RSPCA did tremendous work too. Annette Guice from Animal Liberation Queensland and Mike West from Birds Queensland also did wonderful work.

I want to very sincerely put on record my gratitude to Dr Carol Booth from the Queensland Conservation Council. I often rely upon Dr Booth for advice and encouragement on these sorts of matters.

I believe it was around the time she got involved in this campaign that the five wonderful groups that I have mentioned—the Queensland Conservation Council, Birds Queensland, Animal Liberation, the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland and the RSPCA—really got serious about making this ban on the recreational shooting of duck and quail happen. I am thrilled to support this piece of legislation today. I want to thank the minister and sincerely thank the EPA for the great work they do.