




Speech by  
**Gavin King**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

Hansard Wednesday, 12 September 2012

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## **ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KING** (Cairns—LNP) (7.43 pm): I rise to support the Animal Care and Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The first point I want to put on the parliamentary record is my utter dismay and, frankly, disgust with the behaviour of the Labor Party in opposing this bill. They just do not get it. They have used every excuse in the book to avoid supporting this practical bill, which is simply about the cruel treatment and slaughter of turtles and dugong. This is not about Indigenous rights or traditional hunting—not at all. This is not about white versus black. This is about cruelty. I live in Cairns in Far North Queensland. I live in the very place these despicable acts of cruelty by a select rogue element are taking place. I have spoken with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are appalled by the behaviour of these rogue elements. I have spoken with tourism operators who are forced to stand by in shock and horror with tourists from all over the world as these rogue elements carry out the most despicable acts of cruelty on these beautiful marine creatures.

I refer now to an article in the Cairns post on 10 November 2011 that details just a couple of incidents near Green Island, a tourism icon in my electorate. The article states—

Tourists have watched on in horror as turtles have been slaughtered in a popular holiday location in the Far North.

Tourism operators said—

... killings happened often enough to distress visitors and send the wrong message around the world.

Visitors to Green Island ... were confronted with a number of speared turtle carcasses left at the popular tourist island.

Two weeks ago, tourists said they saw fins being cut off turtles on an island beach.

A ranger at the park was also believed to have been threatened for asking traditional hunters not to kill marine animals in front of tourists.

I table that article for the record.

*Tabled paper:* Article from cairns.com.au, dated 10 November 2011, titled 'Calls for action on traditional turtle hunting after tourists witness slaughter on Green Island' [[1028](#)].

I reiterate that this bill is about cruelty such as those acts described above and many, many more. This bill is long overdue and yet again we see that our government is acting where the previous Labor government failed. I pay tribute to far northern animal campaigner Colin Riddell whose tireless work on this particular issue over many years, alongside Bob Irwin and others, has played a large role in our moves to stamp out this despicable practice. Colin has been appalled by the lack of action by Labor members such as his own MP, the member for Mulgrave, who for many years has stuck his head in the sand and refused to even acknowledge that there was a problem with some traditional hunting practices. I also pay tribute to Green Island's Steve Davies who has repeatedly stood up and spoken out about these cruel acts because he has had to deal with the impacts on a weekly basis.

I reiterate that this bill does not in any way impede on the ability for Indigenous people to exercise traditional hunting rights. This is about cruelty. This is about stopping certain rogue elements from tethering a dying dugong to attract other dugong. This bill intends to stop certain rogue elements from cutting pieces

of meat from a turtle to eat before the turtle has died. It stops the practice of storing a turtle for an extended period of time on its back without adequate food and water so that it dies. The Labor MPs opposite should hang their heads in shame for opposing this practical bill. If, for example, this was a debate or a bill about the cruel slaughter or torture of koalas, would the Labor MPs opposite oppose it and speak in the despicable way they have in this chamber? That example highlights the hypocrisy of the Labor Party yet again. Just like the treatment of koalas or any other animal, cruelty cannot be tolerated in any way regardless of the reason for that behaviour. I fully support and commend the minister for this bill and I commend it to the House.