




Speech by

Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

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ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.01 pm): I rise to speak in the debate of the Animal Care and Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is an important bill. I think that has been highlighted by the fact that not only has the Minister for Agriculture spoken to the bill but also Minister Elmes and Minister Powell have spoken to the bill. That is the importance we on this side of the House place on this bill.

We have no intention to remove the rights of native title holders to hunt dugong and turtles. That is not what this bill is about. This bill is about cruelty, not about removing rights. To say that it is about removing rights is to spread rumour and innuendo. This bill is purely about cruelty. Unfortunately, as we have seen before and as has been stated here in the House, there will always be a rogue element. I have seen turtles being killed with a besser block. It is very unsavoury to see a poor old sea turtle being killed with a besser block, and that is the sort of thing we will be preventing. That was never the traditional way. I am sure the shadow minister will accept that killing a turtle with a besser block is not the traditional way.

I acknowledge that turtles, being reptiles, have a relatively small brain and are very hard to kill. I also acknowledge that dugong have a relatively small brain that is encased in bone and cartilage and are also very hard to kill. But they can be killed appropriately, even with native instruments. This bill is about killing the animals appropriately so that the community can accept it. Even the Indigenous people from the Torres Strait and the mainland do not condone cruelty.

Mr Mulherin: This is putting the cart before the horse.

Mr RICKUSS: I take that interjection. This has gone on for ages. To say that there was no consultation is completely untrue. There was consultation. This proposal had been highlighted and was part of the election campaign. As Minister Powell just pointed out, it was part of the LNP's campaign.

Mr Mulherin interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order! Deputy Leader of the Opposition, your interjections are incessant, the member is not taking them and I cannot hear him speak. Please keep your interjections to a minimum.

Mr RICKUSS: This will actually give Indigenous communities greater certainty. They do not want the animals treated cruelly, overhunted or poorly managed.

Mr Cox interjected.

Mr RICKUSS: That is right: there is no intention to remove the rights of native title holders to hunt turtles and dugong. This bill will give them greater certainty. The 12-month grace period, which was recommended in the committee report, is really important. I am sure that Minister Elmes and his department will do a good job of consulting on that.

There is nothing in this bill about stopping hunting. The member for Mackay mentioned that we were going to stop hunting. That is definitely not part of this legislation. Then the member for South Brisbane

talked about goannas eating turtle eggs. Hello! That is nature. How are we going to stop that? That has been going on for thousands of years, I am sure. This bill in no way takes away the hunting rights of native title holders, but they will no longer have carte blanche. The relevant policy document released before the election states—

The LNP will remove the current exemption for traditional hunters from the law that makes it illegal for anyone to wound, mutilate, torture or unnecessarily prolong the death of an animal ...

That is what we are talking about. We have acted to bring about a situation that is very similar to that enacted in Northern Territory legislation. That legislation has been in place for aeons, and the traditional hunters in the Northern Territory have not felt that their native title rights have been taken away or that they are being picked on by their government, because they have not been. There is no intention to remove the rights of native title holders when hunting turtles and dugong.

I draw an analogy with legal cockfighting in England and the United States. I had an uncle who, before the war, kept roosters to participate in legal cockfighting. Some South-East Asian communities still have illegal cockfighting. We are seeking to stop that sort of thing because it is cruel.

The Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs referred to the 12-month education program that will be undertaken. We want the community to understand their rights and to understand that they cannot overhunt and they cannot sell the meat; it is to be consumed in accordance with traditional custom. There will be a limit on transportation. They will not be allowed to mutilate or torture the animals.

This bill will ensure the turtle and dugong populations remain sustainable. There is no argument that dugong and turtles are important dietary protein for Torres Strait Islanders in particular as well as some of the Indigenous people on the mainland, but hunting has to be managed sustainably or else they will not be an important part of their diet because they will no longer exist. This is a good piece of legislation. The proposals it contains were promised in the 100-day action plan.

The member for South Brisbane was rabbiting on about the lack of consultation and the time frames. Those opposite do not understand the process. The CLA, of which three members of the opposition are a part, gave us the referral and set down the time frame for report. Members of the portfolio committee do not set the time lines; the CLA sets the time lines—and the opposition has equal representation on that committee.

Did they bring the matter back to the House and complain about it? No, it was all agreed and that is what we have done. We have followed the guidelines of the parliamentary committee system. The parliamentary committee system is about a committee looking at the legislation that is presented to it and doing a good job of examining that legislation and improving on it. I think this committee has done a good job of that. I am sure the minister acknowledges that. He acknowledges that by the fact that he has taken on board a lot of the recommendations that were made. I thank the minister for taking on board those recommendations. They were extremely important recommendations.

Recommendation 3 states—

The committee recommends that the Minister seeks the support of the House for the committee to review the legislation twelve months after its commencement.

The minister has highlighted the fact—and this is a good point—that there is no need to do that, because it is going to be reviewed in 12 months time. Recommendation 4 states—

The committee notes that the wording in proposed section 41A(2) in clause 10 is consistent with the Act but has concerns, and recommends that the proposed section be amended if possible to ensure that clear wording is substituted and clear examples of permissible hunting methods are included.

That has been clarified as well, which is important. This bill has been improved by it going through the committee system. We have extended the grace period from six months to 12 months so that the legislation could be worked through properly. The report states—

Given the work required, the committee believes that the grace period should be extended to twelve months.

That recommendation has been accepted by the minister. This is what good committee work is about. It is not about harping on about the process after the process has finished. It is about getting involved in the committee process, making sure it works and making improvements to the bill. That is what this committee has done.

I would like to thank the members of the committee who worked extremely hard on this bill. I would like to thank the staff who also worked extremely hard on this bill. The reporting time was short, but we managed it and we managed it well. We came up with some good recommendations. I support the bill.