




Speech by

Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Wednesday, 13 February 2013

MOTION—NATURE CONSERVATION (WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT) AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (8.06 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion. I thank the member for South Brisbane or her speech writer for likening the flying fox issue to butterflies. I am sure that will resonate in my community for a long time! The damage caused by flying foxes is a serious issue and for decades growers in the electorate of Burnett have been trying a range of non-lethal methods to deter flying foxes from their crops like lighting infrastructure, bird fright and netting of different types. The process is something we have had to do to protect livelihoods. In addition, we are certainly willing to protect industries and employment in rural Queensland. As part of the rebuilding phase after the recent floods, rural Queensland needs help. The unemployment rates in some electorates is high. Tornadoes and floods have devastated what infrastructure was on some farms, so again this legislation is welcomed and very timely.

We need this legislation to protect jobs and livelihoods, after the damage caused recently with no power and nets. Again, I have examples of losses and I hope the member for South Brisbane can understand that 20 per cent of crops over two nights taken by flying foxes is real and tangible. This is an industry that represents more than 400 farmers and \$400 million of farm gate industry in the Burnett electorate. I have many examples where DMPs work in deterring flying fox damage. The cost to farmers in my electorate has been enormous, with little evidence or science to support the fact that any success was achieved under the wildlife management regulation of 2006. The previous arrangements did nothing to assist with the ecological sustainability of flying foxes.

I was frustrated every time I visited a farm or had one of the farmers contact me that the previous legislation would not allow sustainable lethal management to assist in crop protection. My electorate has suffered with poor management of flying foxes over many years and, finally, a sensible and detailed solution has been implemented. For many years the opposition has given little heed to the problems that growers and their families suffered because of flying fox damage. The new laws prescribe that where a grower has already tried the most effective non-lethal methods an additional lethal option is possible as a last resort. Under the code of practice, where a particular grower can demonstrate that they have tried non-lethal methods, the grower now has an option for applying for a damage mitigation permit to shoot a limited number of flying foxes.

These laws are not about culling flying foxes. The holders of the permits are able to shoot limited numbers only and are required to comply with the code of practice regarding acceptable shooting practices to ensure that any result of pain and suffering is minimised. Permit holders are also required to keep daily records of shooting activity by completing return of operation forms, which document the time, date, location and number of animals taken.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with Growcom and the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers regarding the needs of growers. I believe that the new flying fox laws get the balance right. They

give growers an additional option of lethal control as a last resort while maintaining strong conservation and animal welfare provisions.

People in a number of areas in my electorate have been forced to live or cohabit with large colonies of flying foxes in urban locations. I am faced with a number of areas in my electorate that have been forced to live or cohabit with large colonies of flying foxes in urban locations. It is outrageous that the previous government considered these circumstances as acceptable. I support non-lethal damage mitigation permits in these circumstances as for years my constituents have lived with damage to their properties and their crops. Flying foxes represent a real threat to human health and wellbeing. I cannot support the disallowance motion.