




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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BIOSECURITY BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (12.01 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to support the Biosecurity Bill 2013. I congratulate the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. John McVeigh, for not only bringing this bill before the House but also taking such a strong stance for all Queenslanders who are facing current drought conditions. Whilst there has been some rainfall in the outer areas of Queensland, the northern end of the electorate of Nanango, particularly in the south and getting up into the north Burnett, is really struggling at the moment with one of the driest Februarys on record. I just want to pass on to the House and to anyone listening today just how tough it is out there. I thank the minister and his department for providing us with such wonderful support. I urge people from my electorate to contact my office or the local department, because there is a lot of information out there that we can spread to assist people who are facing such dire circumstances.

I thought it pertinent to thank the chairman of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee, Mr Ian Rickuss, the member for Lockyer and my colleague sitting right here beside me. I commend the hard work of everyone on that committee, which has recommended that this bill be passed. The key objective of this bill is to provide a comprehensive biosecurity framework to manage the impacts of animal and plant diseases and pests in a timely and effective manner, and ensure the safety and quality of animal feed, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs. The bill consolidates, modernises and expands existing provisions to manage and contain biosecurity risks.

Our island nation of Australia enjoys relative safety from many pests and diseases that are prevalent in other countries, partly because of remoteness and partly through expert vigilance by quarantine and import agencies. However, despite measures in place to prevent the entry of biosecurity hazards, pests and disease may still enter through a number of pathways such as wind, water, birds, illegal smuggling, accidental cargo or the sheer ignorance of people who travel to other countries that have biosecurity risks and who bring them into our country without properly declaring them. It is absolutely a pet hate of mine. When I travel internationally my husband and I always end up on an agricultural property, and we always declare that we have been outside a city centre or that our boots may have travelled onto dirt. The reason we do this is to ensure that we are protecting our agricultural industry that we have here in Australia and in Queensland, because it is the backbone of our economy.

An honourable member: It's the right thing to do.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is the right thing to do. I note that Biosecurity Queensland commented in its submission to the committee—

Queensland is undoubtedly the front-line state for biosecurity in Australia. We get more pests and diseases than any other state of national significance and we have dealt with many more incidents in the last seven years than any other state in Australia.

Thank goodness our LNP government has brought in a department of agriculture. What common sense, because we are the front-line state for biosecurity and agriculture in this country so

there is an important need to have a dedicated Minister for Agriculture. What a common-sense government we are.

A government member: Labor doesn't understand that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I wanted to spell that out because it is extremely important, to the members of the Nanango electorate in particular, that we have a minister who looks after—

Mr Langbroek interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am quite sure the constituents of Surfers Paradise would be very happy that we have a Minister for Agriculture. As a regional minister representing a large number of primary producers in my electorate who produce amazing produce such as beef, grains, vegetables, chicken, fruit, pork, wine grapes, peanuts, navy beans, fodder and much, much more, I understand that good biosecurity management is particularly important in Queensland.

We have a wonderful peanut industry in Queensland. I congratulate companies such as Crumptions and the Peanut Company of Australia, which demand rigorous standards and high quality. They are investing a lot of money into industries such as the peanut industry. We demand high-quality peanuts.

There are some key points in this bill that I would like to focus on, and one relates to rabbits. The committee recommended that the government look at a model that is fair and equitable in relation to rabbits in Queensland. I am pleased to see that the government's position and the minister's position in relation to rabbits is to review the current model. I think it is a very good idea to review the current model of rabbits to ensure that everyone is protected from rabbits.

The bill also introduces some common-sense initiatives such as just one generic health certificate to replace the current different certificates for stock, bees and plants. This common-sense streamlining reduces the regulatory burden for primary producers and industry as well as reducing the administrative burden for government.

In the time I have left I want to touch briefly on deer management. This is very important for my electorate given that I have so many deer in the wonderful Somerset region and Crows Nest. Since being elected, I have met with many representatives including RIDGE. Research into Deer Genetics and Environment is a progressive group which has provided submissions on this bill. It is very passionate about feral deer management. I applaud the work that it has done. Large deer populations can have a significant impact on the environment and farm productivity. Under this bill recreational hunting groups can contribute to the long-term management of deer in Queensland, and there is no impediment to landholders implementing property management plans in historic deer ranges.

A biosecurity program is very important. I want to make another point in relation to cattle ticks in my electorate, and this is a point that I campaigned on as well. The Minister for Agriculture knows that the cattle tick line runs right through the middle of the electorate of Nanango. There are many dedicated producers who live in the buffer zone and control zones who do an outstanding job when it comes to the maintenance of that tick line. There are groups such as the Kingaroy Wondai Proston Tick Eradication Committee and the group that has started over near Crows Nest. Ticks cost Queensland producers some \$30 million per year.

Mr Johnson interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I thank the member for Gregory because a lot of that money is coming out of the back pockets of the growers in my electorate who simply cannot afford that at this stage given the current drought conditions. We all know that once rain hits the ticks will take off. I want to congratulate the minister on acknowledging the importance of that to my electorate and addressing that through this bill that is before the House. I also note that there has been a significant DAFF resource commitment for cattle ticks in the South Burnett, with four biosecurity officers stationed between Kingaroy and Mundubbera and extra support when required from the Gatton offices. Again, I would like to congratulate the minister on that point.

A key feature of the Biosecurity Bill is that it is not necessary for all specific biosecurity matters, such as cattle ticks, to be listed as prohibited or restricted matter in order for them to be managed. I am unfortunately running out of time; I could talk on biosecurity for at least another 10 minutes. However, I want to again congratulate the minister for a common-sense piece of legislation. A lot of hard work has gone into this from a lot of different community groups and committees. It is about time that this sort of governance took place in Queensland. I congratulate the minister because it is so evident that, with a dedicated department of agriculture and a dedicated Minister for Agriculture, Queensland really is leading the way as the best agricultural state in Australia.