




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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BIOSECURITY BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.21 pm): I would like to speak to the Biosecurity Bill and acknowledge for the minister that this is a good bill. Obviously, little things will always stand out that people would like to bring to the House's attention, and that is what we are here for in this parliament. As was mentioned previously, Clark McGhie from Australian Wild Country Adventures attended the public hearing. I can relate to where he was coming from. I can also relate to the pig hunting side of it. He raised concerns about the possible impact of this bill on the sustainable management of deer. The Australian Wild Country Adventures submission pointed out that when the deer was introduced it was introduced as fauna, game or stock. Its status has now been reduced to pest.

Australian Wild Country Adventures are sophisticated and well organised. They go out and work with landowners in reducing the deer numbers but at the same time have been able to create an investment and an income. They have given deer hunters an opportunity to go out and shoot those wild deer in their own time and at their own expense. The concern is that the department may say, 'Okay, there are too many numbers here or too many numbers there. We will have to go to a mass helicopter shoot.' That would cost a lot of money. It is probably in the best interests of the department to work with Australian Wild Country Adventures to ensure that a sustainable management program is put in place. In that way they would be reducing the numbers and ensuring that they are sustainable. At the same time there could be a benefit returning to the community—to shooters. I hope that the department can dialogue with Australian Wild Country Adventures in the future so that we can achieve a good outcome for all concerned.

I am led to believe that there are over six million wild pigs throughout North Queensland. There have been conflicting reports about their beginnings. One is that Captain Cook let a few of these pigs go. I have read some information about when Captain Cook landed in Cooktown. A pen of pigs escaped and that is how it is believed the pigs first spread up to the Cape York Peninsula. It has now reached the point where there are over six million pigs. I also believe that recreational hunters play a big part in managing the numbers. As I was saying previously, they go and do this in their own time and at their own expense. Everyone benefits, from the outdoor camping shops to the corner stores, tyre shops, four-wheel-drive shops and gun shops. I have always believed that the introduction of a \$150 bounty for dingo scalps by one of the shires resulted in a dramatic decrease in wild dog numbers. Likewise, when Richmond introduced a feral cat bounty, there was a great reduction in the number of feral cats in that area. Obviously, there need to be incentives to do that.

We do have to acknowledge that there are Aussies, whether they are young teenagers or older generations, who love to go out and have a pig hunt using dogs. Likewise, they like to go out and have a shoot. That creates an economy in itself. The department could go out and undertake an aerial blast, which is going to cost the taxpayers money, but it needs to be acknowledged that recreational shooters can do that in their own time and at their own expense. In the case of the Staaten River

National Park, which is 4,000 square miles—and I have been there—it is a breeding ground for feral animals and noxious weeds. If the legal hunting of pigs can be appropriately managed, I believe there is an opportunity for the pig hunters to reduce those numbers without the department having to worry about those expenses. I am talking about this as it does relate to biosecurity. Obviously there needs to be a reduction. There are six million pigs across North Queensland and that is a massive number of pigs, although I think the numbers have decreased as a result of the drought. When there is a lot of rain, a lot of wet, the pigs scatter. They breed up and are located all over the countryside. This makes them very difficult to get hold of or track down. When it gets dryer, they relocate to the waterholes and they are a much easier target. If a bounty is placed on the pig, I believe it would create a wonderful economy in itself out there and would also bring about a return to this state. Everyone would also benefit.

As the member for Gregory was saying earlier, biosecurity is a big issue. The Productivity Commission undertook an investigation into the cost of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, I think, back in 1998. If there were a small outbreak that was contained, it would cost the livestock industry over \$4 billion. If there were a large outbreak, it would take 10 years to recover and would cost our meat industry up to \$12 billion.

Overall, I believe this is a good bill, and it also deals with the noxious weeds. This is especially important due to the infestation of lantana not so much in our river systems but in our national parks. If cattle eat lantana, they could die. If people rub their skin against it, they can develop irritation and infections. It is a shocking weed. What we can do with the finances available is very broad. I did want to bring that to the minister's attention considering the possibility of lantana taking over this state. I commend this bill to the House.