




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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GUIDE, HEARING AND ASSISTANCE DOGS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.13 pm): I rise to support the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Amendment Bill 2015. Many Queenslanders would be familiar with organisations such as Guide Dogs Queensland. This particular group has provided people with impaired vision a trusted working dog that provides assistance in their daily lives, ensuring those who may have a vision impairment have the capacity to go about their routines such as going to a shopping centre, crossing the road or helping those with such an impairment get to work safe and secure.

Guide, hearing and assistance dogs are working dogs. They are specially trained to allow people with disability to actively partake in all aspects of society. We know that people with disability require the support of these dogs to alleviate the burden or stress on the person to conduct everyday tasks. These dogs essentially enhance the person's independence therefore reducing other aspects of support. There have been many a good report of these types of dogs, such as those that can hear a fire alarm and alert the owner. Whether it is assistance with sight, hearing or mobility, these working dogs offer a great deal of assistance.

This bill creates the right of access for people with disability who rely on certified guide, hearing or assistance dogs to a public place or public passenger vehicle such as a taxi or a place of accommodation such as holiday accommodation. It prescribes an identification procedure that ensures people with disability and their certified dog can be easily recognised as being properly certified under the 2009 act. We want to ensure that people with disability who rely on certified guide, hearing or assistance dogs have independent access to the community. Importantly, this ensures the quality and accountability of these working dogs in relation to training services. The objectives can be further achieved through allowing the issuing of handler identity cards and the certification of guide, hearing and assistance dogs by training institutions. These changes provide assurance and certainty to the community that businesses that certify guide, hearing and assistance dogs trained by approved trainers and training institutions are of robust standards and quality.

Good consultation occurred across this particular field with government agencies, dog training industries, statutory bodies, an advocacy organisation and also with the tourism and accommodation sectors. The overall view from the stakeholder groups was that the act was working well and that it simply required some modest legislative and administrative changes such as that approved trainers or training institutions issue handler identity cards and not government. Importantly, there is a recommendation to relax the requirements of proof of a person's disability every time a person has to renew their identity card. I think that is important. This is also extended to handlers who will no longer need to re-submit a certificate of disability each time they seek renewal of their handler identity card. The relaxing of this requirement will make what can only be described as an overly bureaucratic and onerous task a lot easier for people with disability. I commend the bill to the House.