




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2015

GUIDE, HEARING AND ASSISTANCE DOGS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.49 pm): I rise to speak to the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Amendment Bill 2015. I thank the Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee staff for their assistance with this inquiry and the professionalism with which they have undertaken this task in the time frame assigned. I also thank my fellow committee members from both sides of the House for their participation.

The bill amends the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009 to give effect to recommendations of a stakeholder review panel which conducted a full review of the act from late 2013 to mid 2014. I also thank the member for Aspley for the work she has done as the former minister to initiate and progress these reforms under the former LNP government.

The amendments are intended to maintain an appropriate legislative framework by streamlining administrative processes and reducing red tape while also broadening access rights to accommodate alternative handlers of guide, hearing and assistance dogs where primary handlers require assistance to handle their dogs.

During consideration of this bill the committee noted that there was no direct consultation that had occurred with private operators of public passenger vehicles as part of the stakeholder review process. Given that there are a number of members of the committee who travel from regional Queensland on a regular basis, it is understandable that this matter has been raised. In fact, I think I was reading through the committee briefing notes when I was sitting on a QantasLink flight from Roma to Brisbane. I thought it would be a very interesting situation if there was an assistance dog on that flight.

Public passenger vehicles include aircraft, trains, buses and taxis. In response to the committee's inquiries we were advised that the department had had conversations with transport groups such as the Taxi Council and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority since the commencement of the act. In addition, the department advised that private transport operators will form a large focus for the department's communications strategy. As part of this, the department will proactively engage with key stakeholders and use existing networks of the Department of Transport and Main Roads to increase awareness of the act. Stakeholders will also be consulted as part of the operationalisation of the legislative changes. It is particularly important. There are many school bus operators across rural and regional Queensland and in the south-east corner. It is important that they actually know what this legislation requires them to do. I encourage the department to continue to engage with and assist public transport operators across Queensland to ensure they are aware of the obligations this legislation places upon them in relation to guide, hearing and assistance dogs. I commend the legislation to the House.