




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2015

AGRICULTURE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (4.30 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. We all know the importance of agriculture to the state of Queensland. Queensland has the largest area of agricultural land of any Australian state as well as the highest proportion of land area in Australia dedicated to agriculture. Agricultural industries are absolutely vital to the Queensland economy. About 30,500 businesses carry out agricultural activity in Queensland. The total value of Queensland's primary industry commodities as at April 2015 was forecast to be \$15.2 billion. Agricultural industries provide the backbone for a large proportion of many regional and rural communities throughout Queensland.

Approximately one in seven Queenslanders work somewhere within the agriculture supply chain. Obviously, with agriculture playing such a crucial role in our state's economy, we must do everything we can to ensure that the legislation that supports our food and fibre industries remains contemporary and accessible. That is why I am so pleased to be speaking in support of the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 today.

In my role as chair of the Agriculture and Environment Committee I have had the opportunity to hear the views and concerns of agricultural stakeholders from around the state. I am well aware of the need for us to streamline the legislative processes that are dealt with in the bill to help create efficiencies and increase certainty for these stakeholders. The Agriculture and Environment Committee's only recommendation in our report tabled on 1 October was that the bill be passed. As chair, I am pleased to support this bill in the House today.

The bill makes amendments to a number of acts to streamline legislative processes and requirements, provide clarity and flexibility, and create the opportunity for efficiencies in agricultural practices. These relatively minor but important amendments range across a number of categories including biosecurity, new technology, animal disease risks, wild dog attacks on stock and the reduction of red tape.

With regard to biosecurity, the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 ensures that a timely response can be made under current legislation if there is an outbreak of an exotic disease such as foot-and-mouth disease. I am sure I do not need to expand on how devastating such an outbreak could be to our agricultural industries, our economy, our health, our lifestyle and our environment.

To assist stakeholders in embracing new technologies, the bill also makes changes to the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act. These amendments will allow businesses working in the agriculture sector to make use of unmanned aerial vehicle technology to aerially spray crops for pests and weeds. This will help these businesses compete and expand in an evolving technological environment.

The bill also amends the Stock Act 1915 to increase flexibility for inspectors in managing animal disease. These amendments remove a requirement for inspectors to impose quarantine measures while still affording them powers to quarantine where it is appropriate to do so.

Given problems existing throughout Queensland with wild dog attacks on stock such as sheep, goats and cattle, not to mention attacks on people and their pets, I am sure stakeholders will welcome the bill's provisions to assist farmers in dealing with wild dogs. The amendments in the bill will close a gap that would have been brought about by the repeal of section 95 of the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002 on commencement of the Biosecurity Act. This will ensure farmers who destroy a dog attacking or about to attack stock do not risk committing an offence and are not subject to compensation.

Importantly, the bill also makes moves to reduce government red tape, though not in the wasteful manner of the Newman government, which devoted millions in taxpayer dollars to counting requirements in legislation. Through amendments to the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act and the Animal Care and Protection Act, the bill removes redundant provisions and decreases the regulatory burden on Queenslanders. For all these reasons, I am proud to support the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.