




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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EXHIBITED ANIMALS BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Exhibited Animals Bill 2015. Queensland is in the enviable position of having a profitable animal exhibition industry that makes a significant direct contribution in the order of \$100 million annually to our economy and an equal indirect contribution to our reputation as a tourist destination. Employing 1,000 Queenslanders, our zoos, theme and wildlife parks, aquaria, mobile wildlife demonstrators, circuses and magicians bring joy and wonder to many and invaluable opportunities to learn about and interact with these brilliant and engaging animals under controlled circumstances.

As we have already heard in the House, the bill will consolidate and streamline regulation of the exhibited animals industry, which is currently spread across four acts: the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, the Fisheries Act 1994, the Nature Conservation Act 1992 and the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. It will also provide for exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals while ensuring that associated animal welfare, biosecurity and safety risks are prevented or minimised. Currently, there are six overlapping and inconsistent licensing frameworks under the aforementioned legislation. They have inconsistent licensing requirements, fees and procedures which cause confusion, impose additional compliance burdens and frustrate innovation within the industry. The bill will reduce the regulatory burden on exhibitors by introducing a new regulatory and licensing framework specifically for the animal exhibition industry. A single licensing scheme under a single act will replace the six fragmented schemes currently in operation.

The keeping and exhibiting of animals involves inherent risk from the animals to their handlers, the viewing public and to the community generally. Equally, the keeping and exhibiting of animals involves potential risks to animal welfare and biosecurity. Given the nature of many of the animals contained in such exhibits, including tigers, crocodiles and my personal favourite, venomous snakes, the community has a right to expect that those involved in exhibiting or dealing with an exhibited animal will be required to take reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise the inherent risks associated with exhibiting and dealing with these animals.

The bill will ensure more comprehensive and consistent management of animal welfare, biosecurity and safety risks posed by the industry by imposing a general obligation on persons exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals to prevent or minimise such risks. This obligation will apply consistently to all animal exhibits, including those that do not need a licence, and will address gaps in risk coverage without imposing unjustified licensing requirements on all exhibitors. Under the bill, animal exhibits will be licensed in response to a management plan prepared by the applicant explaining how they would minimise the relevant risks and relevant adverse effects and, in so doing, I believe will better meet community expectations for risk management. This risk based approach will be further complemented and supported by regular inspection and monitoring.

I note from the minister's introductory speech that providing for risk based licensing will allow a greater range of species to be exhibited in Queensland as long as the risks are effectively managed.

Minister, I am unsure whether Patagonian mara or capybara have me personally excited, but the news that veiled chameleons that bear a strong resemblance to much loved Disney character Pascal from *Tangled*, and meerkats of the irreverent King Julien, the meerkat variety from the movie *Madagascar*, may be coming to a zoo near us will earn you serious street cred with my two young boys. Allowing exhibitors to keep almost any animal for any type of exhibition, provided they can manage the risks, will mean opportunities for business to exhibit a greater range of species in Queensland and allow them the flexibility they need to grow their economy.

I certainly appreciate the impact and excitement that can be generated by a new exhibit. I note from the committee's report and overview of the sector that, as at August 2012, there were 135 exhibitors licensed in Queensland, providing a wide range of exhibits to cater for preferences of every kind. Some like the cute ones—and it is hard to go past the quintessential Australian koala and native marsupials. For others, it is the majestic mammals of the sea, dolphins and whales. Of course, it would be remiss of me not to mention Sea World, on our very own doorstep, which is renowned for combining the exhibition of animals with the conservation of the same through education and the rescue and rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned wildlife. For others, the big cats are always a significant drawcard.

For me it is saltwater crocs and hippos. Perhaps it was spending the first five years of my life in the Northern Territory or regular holidays spent with my mother's family, who hail from Cairns, that inspired my love of salties. The hippo—I am not so sure; I think it was simply love at first sight. When Melbourne Zoo some years ago exhibited a baby hippo, I was smitten. I find it hard to believe that with such adorable eyes, big round bodies and tiny ears on their big oily heads, words such as 'deadly', 'catastrophic' and 'life-ending injury' are used to describe the consequences of interactions between these animals and humans in uncontrolled environments. However, I am more than happy to trust the experts on this point and am grateful to have the opportunity that places such as Australia Zoo provide to see these animals in as natural an environment as possible to appreciate their virtues, learn about them and live to tell the tale.

To return to my original point, allowing exhibitors to keep almost any animal for any type of exhibition, provided they can manage the risks, will allow them the flexibility they need to grow the economy and attract visitors to our Queensland exhibits. Another feature of the bill is the introduction of uniform minimum exhibition requirements. Importantly, if a species cannot be kept by other Queenslanders for private recreation, then under the bill it will need to be exhibited. This will deter private collectors operating under the guise of keeping for exhibition, among other benefits, and will assist in containing the demand for animals that could trigger illegal take from the wild. Growing up, my father bred local parrots and exotic parrots from India, Burma and Afghanistan. He had a deep respect for sustainable breeding and respect for licensing and registration schemes aimed at protecting and curtailing demand for animals that could trigger illegal take from the wild, which has contributed to the listing of treasures such as the yellow-tailed black cockatoo on our threatened list. The bill will ensure that animals kept under an exhibition licence are actually exhibited, rather than being kept for private recreation.

In summary, I support the bill before the House because I believe that it achieves the desired objectives of providing for exhibiting and dealing with exhibited animals, while ensuring the relevant risks and relevant adverse effects associated with such activities are prevented or minimised. Importantly, I believe it does so while reducing the regulatory burden on exhibitors by introducing a single licensing scheme under a single act, creating new opportunities for exhibitors to exhibit a greater range of species provided the risks can be minimised.

Animal exhibitors are a popular form of cultural entertainment, but in my opinion the greater value lies in the capacity to educate, engage and foster a love of, and respect for, animals and animal conservation. I read the committee's report with interest and found the statistics contained in the report regarding Queensland's contribution to overall zoo visitation noteworthy, with Queensland accounting for five million of the 14 million visits each year to Australian zoos. With a four-year-old and an 18-month-old at home, I have no doubt that I will be making many and repeated contributions to these figures over the coming years. I commend the bill to the House.