




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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EXHIBITED ANIMALS BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (5.13 pm): In rising to participate in the debate on the Exhibited Animals Bill 2015, I particularly want to support provisions which have been developed to improve animal welfare, biosecurity and public safety regarding the exhibition of wildlife and the standard model for licensing and fees for wildlife exhibitors. I congratulate my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, his predecessor in the former minister, the shadow minister and the committee for their work on this bill. The Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing currently operates two wildlife exhibition centres at the David Fleay Wildlife Park and at the Walkabout Creek Visitor Centre which provide opportunities for the general public to view a range of wildlife at the Gold Coast and in Brisbane respectively with a particular emphasis on promoting conservation initiatives being undertaken by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. Both of these centres will come under the framework of the Exhibited Animals Bill that we are discussing here today.

Under the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, the Daisy Hill Koala Centre is managed as a dedicated koala education facility and features a large outdoor koala enclosure and many interactive displays. This centre will also come under the new framework. In the last few months I have been fortunate to visit the Walkabout Creek Visitor Centre at The Gap in Brisbane and the David Fleay Wildlife Park at the Gold Coast, which are two of the three national park visitor centres in which the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service is currently investing around \$4.1 million. This investment will enhance infrastructure and visitor experiences to allow more visitors to share in the wonder of what our national parks and wildlife have to offer. I want to speak in more detail about these wonderful facilities and illustrate the application of the Exhibited Animals Bill to my portfolio responsibilities.

The David Fleay Wildlife Park is located at West Burleigh on the Gold Coast and is dedicated to the memory of Dr David Fleay, who established the park in the late 1950s and, among other achievements, was a pioneer in successfully breeding Australian wildlife in captivity. The park was later acquired by the state in the 1980s and subsequently dedicated under the Nature Conservation Act as a conservation park in October 1995. Since 1997 the centre has been known as the David Fleay Wildlife Park. The park combines community education, ecotourism and wildlife conservation where visitors can explore on their own or join the fantastic rangers from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service for one of the daily wildlife shows. The park plays an important role in showcasing the efforts of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to wildlife research, breeding and public education and has a particular focus on threatened species. In fact, it is a terrific place to see a large number of threatened species all in one location. The wildlife that can be seen at Fleays includes iconic Australian fauna such as the cassowary, crocodiles, koalas, emus, brolgas, dingoes, bilbies, tree kangaroos and platypus. The park has recently completed a very popular Easter school holiday season, welcoming more than twice the number of visitors compared with last year's Easter break and more than three times the number recorded during Easter 2013. As part of new

developments at the park, an amphitheatre will be built to encourage more visitors and further promote the department's conservation work, with construction scheduled for completion in August this year. The amphitheatre will be a hub for showcasing interactive exhibits and events as well as provide a valuable education space for school groups visiting the park. The facility will provide an increased range of ranger led interpretation and environmental education activities, including, for example, free flight bird shows. These new exhibits will be administered as appropriate under the framework of the Exhibited Animals Bill.

The Walkabout Creek Visitor Centre is located on Mount Nebo Road at The Gap in Brisbane on the edge of the D'Aguilar National Park. The animals on display at Walkabout Creek include a variety of birds in a walk-through aviary, kangaroos, wallabies, platypus, quoll, wombat as well as turtles, fish, snakes and frogs. The ranger guided talks and tours, called Wild Encounters, are held every weekend and the centre also hosts daily ranger led feeding presentations, and visitors can learn more about an incredible Australian mammal—the platypus. Like at Fleays, the philosophy of developing wildlife displays at Walkabout Creek is inspired by the protected areas in which the exhibited animals naturally occur. This is typified by the newly developed Gondwana Rockpool, home of the resident platypus, Burrun. The exhibit was inspired by the rock pools of the World Heritage listed rainforests of Lamington National Park and provides a meaningful connection between this iconic species and the protected areas required for platypus conservation.

The centre also showcases many of South-East Queensland's national parks through a virtual lookout featuring magnificent sites and inspiring landscapes. As mentioned, the centre is located on the edge of the D'Aguilar National Park—

An honourable member: D'Aguilar.

Dr MILES: D'Aguilar National Park.

Mr Powell: Great national park, Minister.

Dr MILES: Indeed. It is a 36,400-hectare park with eucalypt forest and rainforest that stretches from The Gap to Lake Wivenhoe in the west and Mount Mee in the north. No other capital city in Australia enjoys a park this large and this diverse just 12 kilometres from the heart of the city.

The future development of the Walkabout Creek centre and the David Fleay Wildlife Park is currently being guided by recommendations developed through two concept master plans and directions papers that present outstanding visions for these centres to continue to act as gateways to Queensland's national parks and encourage people to experience the parks for themselves. The centres will also continue to be destinations for visitors and locals to connect with nature and delight in nature based tourism and recreational opportunities. In relation to the application of the Exhibited Animals Bill to these wildlife centres, David Fleay's and Walkabout Creek hold associate membership of the Zoo and Aquarium Association. However, the centres have not previously been required to operate under a state licensing scheme.

The Daisy Hill Koala Centre is located in the Daisy Hill Regional Park, approximately 25 kilometres south of Brisbane. It was built by the Queensland government and opened to the public in 1995. Admission is free to the centre, which has two viewing boardwalks from where the three resident koalas can be seen. The centre attracts more than 65,000 visitors a year. Members of the public are not allowed to handle or pat the koalas; it is more of an educational facility where the public can learn about the threats and concerns facing the koala population in Queensland. Daisy Hill Koala Centre staff provide educational talks to groups in the centre where the public learn about how to keep koalas safe in their backyard and what the Queensland government is currently doing to help koalas.

The Exhibited Animals Bill, once enacted, will bring all three centres under the licensing scheme. The departments welcome the bill as an additional platform for supporting operational transparency, best practice animal welfare, biosecurity and staff and visitor safety across Queensland's zoological institutions. I know that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection are committed to ensuring that all three centres' exhibits comply with emerging industry standards. Under the bill, this will include the development of risk management plans to help ensure that best practice animal welfare standards are being applied in managing the Walkabout Creek, the David Fleay Wildlife Park and the Daisy Hill Koala Centre collections and to inform the centres' licence conditions and future resourcing.

As the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef, I take my responsibilities for the management of native wildlife protected under the Nature Conservation Act very seriously. Although the majority of my wildlife responsibilities relate to the conservation and management of species in their natural environment, I have a strong interest

in ensuring that anyone caring for Queensland's native animals in an exhibited environment are doing so under a best practice framework and are delivering a consistent and appropriate duty of care. I am confident that that framework will be delivered under the Exhibited Animals Bill. I commend the bill to the House.