



Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**


**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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## **EXHIBITED ANIMALS REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (8.42 pm): I pick up where the member for Lockyer also started, by calling into question the member for Mackay's contribution. She quoted the shadow minister for agriculture in his contribution to what was then the legislation around exhibited animals. I can tell the House that, when I was the minister for environment, everyone in the exhibited animals industry was hanging out for that legislation to come through. They were waiting for the day when we would modernise the legislation that sits around the regulating of their industry. It was well and truly overdue. It started under the LNP, it concluded under the ALP and that is why it had our support. However, there is a difference between the legislation itself and the regulation that followed and, therefore, tonight the LNP is moving to disallow that regulation.

Even when the LNP was in government, the animal exhibitors had concerns about where the regulation could go. It was always a case of the devil being in the detail. Even then they were talking to myself and my good colleague the honourable Dr John McVeigh, who was then the agriculture minister, about what was going to appear in the regulation. We gave them assurances that we would hear their concerns and therefore reflect the regulation. Unfortunately, the Palaszczuk Labor government ended up being not only the one to introduce and pass the legislation but also the one to force through the regulation that we are debating this evening.

I hate to say this, but the exhibitors were spot-on. They had every reason to be concerned about the devil in the detail, because what we are debating tonight is exactly that. Under the new act and regulation, operators are required to submit management plans to the agriculture department for every species they wish to exhibit. Exhibitors will be required to generate management plans for each species they already have a permit for and they believe that there is simply not enough time to produce those retrospective management plans, which are lengthy and time consuming to produce being between four and five pages long. While some exhibitors may be able to group some animals together, it is unclear what groupings will be accepted by the department.

Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I both know that one of the greatest animal exhibitors in the state is Australia Zoo. It is a true wildlife warrior that also offers employment through what is probably the iconic tourism attraction on the Sunshine Coast. This evening I looked quickly at the Australia Zoo website. It has 86 different animals. That may not include different species, because as we all know there are four different species of kangaroo alone. On the basis that there are 86 different species, we are looking at in the order of 400 pages of management plans, most for species that Australia Zoo has had in its keeping for more than seven years. That is unrealistic. It is unfair that that be imposed on an organisation such as Australia Zoo. Some may say, 'It's fine. Australia Zoo can do it because they are large enough. That is a drop in the ocean to them.' I am sorry, but every minute that Australia Zoo staff spend preparing those management plans for species that they have held for more than seven years

means hours and minutes that they cannot spend caring for those animals, caring for the broader environment and caring for the tourism industry on the Sunshine Coast, creating jobs and attracting tourists, whether they be domestic or international, to Australia Zoo.

I think what the exhibitors want is quite reasonable. They do not want retrospective management plans. If the management plans must be retrospective, then allow exiting operators sufficient time to prepare those plans. No management plans should be required for what is known as category A or commonly kept low-risk native recreational animals, such as the blue-tongue lizard or the carpet python, because those are low-risk animals and anyone over the age of 13 can apply to keep them as a pet, with no management plan at all.

**Mr Costigan** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** I take the interjection from the member for Whitsunday. I hear he has a couple of blue-tongue lizards up at his place. Maybe it is his 13-year-old who cares for them. The exhibitors want a better definition on groupings for their management plans and I think that is fair enough. Tonight the LNP is moving this disallowance motion so that we can throw out this regulation and start again. We can get it right by consulting with the exhibitors and having some common sense around what is proposed.

A number of my colleagues have talked about the fees for new exhibition licences and the fees based on the number of staff. I come back to the point that, whilst those fees may not seem much, you need to add them to the cost of rates, the cost of feed, the cost of the staff themselves, and the cost of marketing and promoting exhibitions. We are seeing yet another greedy tax grab by this broke Palaszczuk Labor government that touts that it is all about creating jobs, but again tonight we see it standing up for a job-destroying levy. It is on that basis that I also cannot support this motion.

In addition, no exhibited animal facility will be able to hold a species for captive breeding, research or re-release. Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I both know that exhibitors have been the driving force behind many endangered species programs. Under this regulation, they will not be able to take part unless the animals are removed from those vital programs and exhibitors are forced into meeting the minimum display obligation.

One of my proudest moments was working with the Save the Bilby Fund during my time as the minister for environment. Guess what? The only way we are saving the bilby is by captive breeding programs. Who is driving that? It is Dreamworld—an animal exhibitor. If we take away the ability for these exhibitors to participate in captive breeding programs, participate in research like we know Terry, Bindi and Bob Irwin do at Australia Zoo and not participate in the release of animals bred in captivity then we can kiss a number of Queensland species, Australian species and international species goodbye. It is as simple as that. They are basically the only ones who have the capacity, the interest, the facilities, the ability and the people with the skills, the knowledge and connections to our universities and our educational precincts to be able to pull off the kind of captive breeding programs we need to ensure some of our most endangered species actually continue to thrive.

The LNP supports red-tape reduction. That is why we supported the legislation. It had the support of the exhibitors themselves. I go back to where I began. Even when we were preparing the legislation the exhibitors had concerns around what would appear in the regulation. That is why the honourable Dr John McVeigh and I were meeting with them to ensure we considered their very sensible and rational explanations around what should appear in those regulations. This government touts that it listens and consults but it clearly has not when it comes to developing this regulation. Therefore, I stand alongside the animal exhibitors of Queensland and call on all in this House to disallow this regulation this evening.