




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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## **ANIMAL MANAGEMENT (PROTECTING PUPPIES) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.08 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Animal Management (Protecting Puppies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. To avoid any doubt and in accordance with standing order 260, I declare an interest in the debate and proceedings as I am a member of the Queensland sheep dog association. This interest is declared in the Register of Members' Interests. I am also the proud owner of three retired border collie working sheepdogs who descend from the Minto Kennel that was owned by Bill Sneddon. My family have had the Minto blood lines for some 50 years. I wish to commend the Australian and Queensland Working Sheep Dog Association and Elizabeth Hughes of the Queensland Working Cattle Dog Trial Association on their submissions to the parliamentary committee.

It was only last weekend at the Roma Show that I caught up with Rosemary and Geoff Gibson. Geoff is president of the Queensland Working Sheep Dog Association, a dog trialler and one of the best trainers of humans and livestock working dogs I have ever met. Geoff has taught me and many others a great deal about livestock working dogs, sheep handling, trialling and welfare. I would also like to commend the following people: Ian and Sharon Beard; Joy Williams, who was the judge at the trials at the Roma Show; Harold Waldron; Rick and Jill Virgo, Bryton Virgo and of course his former dog of the year, Earl; David and Kathy Kirkbride, who are tireless organisers of the Roma sheepdog trials; and Lisa, Michael and Bob Walsh, who are amazing supporters of sheepdog trialling. It would be remiss of me not to mention Meg and Snow Potter and of course Gary and Debbie Hurtz and the many other members and supporters who make sheepdog trialling a great sport in Queensland and Australia and in competitions with New Zealand.

As I looked around the barbecue last Friday night at the sheepdog trials, I could see how every one of these people who love and respect their dogs would be adversely affected by this legislation as they do not fit into the exemption definition as it currently stands. They are retired primary producers, coffee shop owners, those living on small acreage breeding a small number of working dogs for primary producers, retired shearers, cabinet-makers, and stock and station agents, to name a few.

In a 2014 study by the University of Sydney entitled 'Estimating the economic value of Australian stock herding dogs', it was estimated that livestock working dogs contribute conservatively \$1 billion to the Australian agricultural economy. Elizabeth Hughes summed up the importance of livestock working dogs to all livestock industries when she said—

... our livelihood is very dependent on the use of livestock working dogs.

...

The breeders and handlers of these livestock working dogs are also responsible for the ongoing supply of replacement livestock working dogs to the agricultural sector and have influenced the livestock handling practices by supplying herding dogs and providing education in the use of same.

There are codes of practice and expectations related to breeding, care and welfare of livestock working dogs, which is in stark contrast to the distasteful puppy farms that this bill seeks to address. Those with livestock working dogs value their dogs as these dogs are the workforce in their business or occupation, be it a drover, station manager, station employee, contract musterer, transport operator, or stock and station agent, to name a few.

This bill when understood from a practical livestock working dog and agricultural perspective does not strike the right balance between meeting the expectations of welfare and the needs of the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector will find it very difficult to carry out their established business practices and will be faced with unnecessary and burdensome regulations, and I will detail a number of concerns and questions for the minister.

I was disappointed to read some of the department's comments in relation to extending the exemption to potentially cover appropriate categories of breeder. The exemption makes no provision for stock handling and transport contractors, working dog trainers and others involved in dog trials, stock and station agents, or retired primary producers. The department has not considered that the persons engaged by primary producers might be bona fide contractors providing their own horses, dogs and motorbikes and therefore not considered employees. I ask the minister whether she will give further consideration to contractors being included in the exemption as they are excluded as they are not strictly employees.

I disagree with the department on their view that widening the exemption to transport contractors, trial dog trainers and retired primary producers would increase the scope for misuse as a loophole. This is an ill-informed assumption from the departmental workers who have obviously never owned a working dog that resided on non-rural land. In some local government areas, these working dogs have been for the last 10 years registered and licensed by local governments by kennel permits, and I might add they have been monitored and enforced by local governments. Animal Liberation Queensland are not in possession of the facts, and their assertions of a loophole are ridiculous. I am familiar with the requirements for kennel permits and, believe me, it would be easier to claim to be a grazier than a working dog trainer.

The department has further advised that, consistent with the considerations when the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 was developed, the department considers exemptions for working dogs should remain very limited. I remind the department that the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act was not evidence based and, if it were, we would not have some of the problems with unwanted cats and dogs that we have today. I find the department's arguments against expanding the exemption unfounded and the benefit to the agricultural sector outweighs the concerns by far. It is not the drovers, the station managers, the station employees, the contract musterers, the transport operators or the sheep and cattle dog triallers who are perpetuating the problem with puppy farms—quite the opposite. However, these people are now caught up in legislation and these are very disappointing circumstances.

I strongly urge the government to expand the exemption definition for livestock working dogs to people who are not primary producers and fall into these categories: those who may live in a semirural area on small acreage; retired primary producers who trial and breed a few replacement dogs; those who train livestock working dogs to supply to primary producers, livestock handling contractors and livestock trucking companies; drovers who are not primary producers; and those who are involved in and bona fide members of livestock trialling organisations. I ask that the government give due consideration to expanding the exemption as I have outlined. I ask this on behalf of those organisations who made submissions. I respectfully request that the exemption issue be addressed by the government as a matter of urgency.