




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2016

EXHIBITED ANIMALS REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.05 pm): I add my support to the disallowance motion relating to the Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016. As the former shadow minister for agriculture I am particularly interested in this issue, as I have followed the path of these regulations since the passing of the exhibited animals legislation in May 2015. I thank my colleagues the new shadow minister for agriculture and the member for Burnett, who are very much across this issue. They have had to explain to those opposite that this is not about us opposing the legislation; we are seeking to disallow the regulation. Those opposite who will speak may wish to adjust their talking points. It will be interesting to follow the debate of this disallowance motion.

During the time we were considering the legislation and looking at the draft regulations I was contacted by Mr Ben Bawden of Bawden's Cockatoo Chaos. He highlighted his concerns and those of his small business about the contents of the then draft regulations. Ben is a great, dedicated young man who runs his own mobile wildlife demonstration business. He is a professional, he is committed and he is passionate about wildlife.

There are about 70 family owned wildlife demonstration businesses like Ben's around Queensland providing education and awareness for our community. It is businesses like this that take the time to go to the small country shows, like the eight country shows in my electorate and those in the electorate of Callide. It is disappointing that the Minister for Agriculture does not seem to get the value of these businesses. Perhaps that is because there are only 70 of them. I will get to the lack of consultation that seems to be a thread of this Palaszczuk Labor government. It is disappointing that this minister just does not seem to get it.

These people were hugely disappointed by the minister's dreadful comments in relation to the zoo industry. As a result of those comments they just do not feel supported. It is disappointing that the minister would be so overt in her comments, sideswiping this whole industry. As I said, she has probably looked at it and thought, 'There are only 70.' It is a bit like 'we have created only 26 jobs in Queensland'.

It is these businesses that introduce our children to native wildlife. They teach them how to care for them and how to look after our fauna. We have all enjoyed their performances at our local shows, our schools, our festivals, birthday parties and, for some of the more urban members, shopping centres. For children in our cities, this can sometimes be the only opportunity they have to see wild animals in real life. I thank Ben for his obvious commitment to this industry and congratulate him on his tireless efforts, working with the opposition to shine a light on these onerous regulations.

It was wonderful to see Ben and his family at the Toogoolawah Show recently. He told me how he started his business on the Darling Downs. When he started that business it cost him \$2,000 in fees and permits. He gradually added the 26 species to his collection of animals. He does not dispute the

need to pay fees. Let us fast forward to today. If this same gentleman was to start this business with this Minister for Agriculture's proposed regulations, it would now cost him around \$15,000. He and other industry members are distraught that there has been widespread condemnation from stakeholders who believed the new regulations were rushed, poorly thought through and showed blatant disregard for industry feedback. There are two key problems. The first is the exorbitant permit fee hikes. Again, those in the industry understand that they have to pay, and I note that the former minister for agriculture is in the chamber and I am sure he gets this. They know they have to pay fees, but in this case it is a 2,700 per cent increase. The second key problem is the over-the-top requirements for species management plans.

I believe it is the job of governments to support small businesses, support innovators and entrepreneurs and support people like Ben who do want to start their own business and who do want to employ people. When we see regulations like this that have been rushed through and that have the potential to make businesses unviable, it is extremely concerning. In my speech in this House in May 2015 in debate on the legislation I highlighted these industry concerns and I asked the department through the minister—if I have my history right, it was Minister Bill Byrne at the time—to aim to reduce the regulatory burden rather than increase it. Whether through the crossover to the new minister it has just gone through to the keeper we will never know. Instead, we now have a group of small businesses that will be bogged down in this onerous paperwork and they also face a huge increase of their fees and permits. Again, they are happy to pay fees but I ask those opposite to consider a 2,700 per cent increase in fees. Is that supporting small business? Is that supporting rural and regional Queensland? Obviously it is not and it certainly should not happen.

I again ask the Minister for Agriculture, who is in the chamber tonight, and her department to go back to those stakeholders. How about consulting with these stakeholders, because those in the industry who are talking to our side of the chamber are certainly saying loud and clear that they have not been consulted by this Labor government? They know and understand that that is the thread of what this Labor government is about: 'If it's in rural and regional Queensland, we just will ignore it and we certainly won't listen to their concerns.' I again ask this minister that she take another look at the regulation, she listen to the industry and she actually consults with the industry and develops a more practical, workable solution including a fee structure that these businesses can simply afford.