




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.13 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Animal Management (Protecting Puppies) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Dog-breeding operations where profit comes before the welfare of a dog and her offspring is an intolerable practice that operates throughout Queensland. The community's distaste and outrage over puppy farms came across very clearly to the committee during our public hearings, with the vast majority of people supporting compulsory registration for dog breeders. This bill unapologetically targets those breeders who have no regard for the health and wellbeing of their animals and subsequently aims to reinstate confidence in legitimate dog breeders in Queensland. The registration of dog breeders will allow the government to better identify and shut down puppy farms. It will also allow Queenslanders to make more informed decisions about where to purchase their new pets. This bill strikes the right balance between meeting the expectations of Queenslanders in relation to the welfare of animals and the need of primary producers to carry on established business practices without unnecessary or burdensome regulations.

I would like to acknowledge the committee members, organisations and departmental representatives who provided submissions and evidence to our inquiry. The committee sincerely thanks everyone who took the time to share their views. I would also like to acknowledge the member for Burnett for his contribution to the committee and I congratulate him on his new role.

The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver on our election commitments. At the last election we pledged that we would protect dogs used for breeding and shut down puppy farms run by unscrupulous and cruel breeders who care only for profit. This bill establishes a compulsory registration scheme for dog breeders that will give such operators nowhere to hide.

Like myself and my family, approximately 40 per cent of Queensland households own a dog. Little Jack—quite a unique name for a dog—is a Jack Russell. I gave the job of naming the puppy to the children when they were very young. It was a difficult decision whether to call him Jack or Russell, but Jack won out. It is clear that Queenslanders do love their dogs and there is a steady demand for puppies in Queensland. It follows that reputable dog breeders are essential if the relationship between Queenslanders and man's best friend is to continue into the future. This legislation is about ensuring that those breeders who place profit before the welfare of dogs are eliminated from this supply chain.

Puppy farms have been exposed as places of unthinkable cruelty where breeding bitches are denied any comfort, exercise, human attention and medical care. Puppies bred in such conditions have a miserable start to life. They are also often prone to poor health, and unsuspecting purchasers of these young dogs from puppy farms often find the animals either die prematurely or they need expensive veterinary treatment. The Palaszczuk government has not rushed to introduce kneejerk legislation in response to a few horror stories in the media. This legislation is the result of broad consultation with the likes of the RSPCA, Dogs Queensland and all Queenslanders. It is balanced to meet community

expectations without burdening ethical and responsible dog breeders with unnecessary regulations. Indeed, the Agriculture and Environment Committee commended the government for the thoroughness of their stakeholder consultation.

The bill provides a clear and effective scheme to identify and locate dog breeders who are not doing the right thing. The biggest barrier to shutting down cruel puppy farms is the inability to locate them. I believe that the added registration obligation for people who breed and supply dogs is a necessary requirement. I want everyone in Queensland who buys a puppy either from a pet shop, an advertisement in a newspaper or over the internet to have the confidence that their new pet is from healthy and well-cared-for stock. I believe that all dog lovers are of the same mind. Today we can take a step towards stamping out puppy farms in Queensland, and we should all be pleased to take part in that step.

The bill introduces a simple online registration scheme with paper based registration available to those unable to register online, as we realise that there are some who are not computer literate or do not have access to a computer. Once registered, the breeder would be issued with a unique breeder identification number and will be required to display their identification in all ads when they are supplying a dog. This identification is what the families of Queensland will be looking out for when they make that decision to add a puppy to the family. This bill will not impact those breeders who are doing the right thing. Accredited breeders of an approved or recognised dog breeder association will be exempt but will need to identify themselves by the accreditation number issued by the association when advertising and supplying these puppies.

Consistent with the Palaszczuk government's election commitment, breeder identification will be required to be recorded against the dog's microchipped information. Mandatory microchipping already applies to most dogs today, so there will not need to be an undue amount of time spent or cost incurred to comply with this legislation. The Agriculture and Environment Committee looked at the government's proposed legislation and only made one recommendation, and that was that the bill be passed. Those who made submissions to the committee should be thanked. As the committee received 227 submissions, it is an indication that the people of Queensland have a deep interest in this bill. No matter who you speak to or who you meet in your role as an MP, everyone is in support of ensuring that man's best friend is treated properly and humanely.

Under this bill, underground puppy breeders and unscrupulous people will now have nowhere to hide and no-one to sell to. This bill will assist government in identifying and shutting down these unscrupulous puppy farms. I am proud to be part of this government, which is taking a stand and targeting those who put profit before the health and wellbeing of puppies. With this bill, families in my electorate who are looking for a puppy will have confidence that the puppy was born to a dog that was cared for, treated well and not chained up in a breeder puppy farm.

The bill also contains unrelated minor amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 and the Biosecurity Act 2014. The amendment to the Animal Care and Protection Act will clarify that the current offence related to blooding a dog applies in any circumstance where live bait is used and is not limited to giving a dog its first taste of blood. The amendments to the Biosecurity Act are minor and will clarify some existing sections of the act prior to the act's implementation on 1 July. I am sure that I speak for many in my electorate of Gladstone when I say that the protection of puppies and dogs from cruel puppy farms is welcome and overdue.

I will now touch on a few of the points raised during committee hearings. The first relates to working dogs in Queensland. These dogs are an important part of the Australian livestock industry. Traditionally, working dogs were used to work and drove cattle. However, there is also the increased use of guardian dogs to protect livestock from wild dog attack. The 'working dog' definition under the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 is quite specific and covers dogs usually kept by primary producers on rural land, primarily for droving, protecting and working stock. I support the exemption for breeders of genuine working dogs because their dogs are usually kept on rural land and are unlikely to cause problems in the community such as straying, barking, nuisance and attacks. This means that local governments would have a very limited role in managing working dogs within their areas.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BUTCHER: They are man's best friend. A lot of graziers are currently struggling due to the drought and increasing wild dog problems. The government has taken this into consideration and has ensured that unnecessary regulatory burden is not placed on graziers, allowing them to get on with managing their own businesses. I support this bill because it provides the correct balance of community animal welfare expectations, regulatory burden on graziers and enforcement capability.

I also touch on managing the animal disease risk for aviary birds. We heard some good stories about this subject during the committee process. The bill amends the Biosecurity Act 2014 and recognises that different types of birds may pose different levels of disease risk. Birds kept for human consumption or to produce eggs for human consumption or birds that have been released for free flight since they had started to be kept in captivity are considered to pose a greater disease risk. Therefore, there is requirement for these entities to be registered. Birds kept in cages, such as finches, softbills or parrots, typically present a lower disease risk as interaction with wild birds is generally restricted. These types of birds are also less likely to come into contact with birds that are kept for commercial purposes such as poultry. Therefore, the requirement for people keeping these types of birds to register has been removed. To be clear, it is not that we are saying there is no risk, as with any large concentration of birds there will be some risk of disease, but for these particular types of birds the disease risk is considered to be far lower. If an incident did occur, the department would still be able to respond using emergency powers in the act. I therefore also support these amendments contained in the bill. They are consistent with the risk management framework around which the Biosecurity Act 2014 is structured and provide a degree of flexibility to manage disease risk while allowing members of the community to continue to enjoy keeping aviary birds without unnecessary or burdensome regulatory requirements.

I take this opportunity to thank the secretariat for the work that was done on this bill. Our committee is very busy at the moment, and the work that Paul, Rob and the team have done has been exceptional. I also thank members of the committee for the work they have done and anticipate further good work from the team going forward. I commend the bill to the House.