




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2016

EXHIBITED ANIMALS REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (8.30 pm): I rise to speak against this disallowance motion and in favour of the changes that will reduce red tape for an industry sector that makes an important contribution to the Queensland economy. In speaking against the motion, I will refer to a speech made in the House in support of the Exhibited Animals Bill 2015 on 21 May just last year. The speech is an enthusiastic endorsement of the laws introduced on 1 July and the rationale behind their introduction. It notes that most of the industry supports the bill as it seeks to ensure new opportunities for the industry and it deals with community expectations of risk while minimising risks to animal welfare, biosecurity and safety. The speech acknowledges the legislation current at the time was fragmented, insufficient and disjointed and its author recognises the extensive consultation process that was undertaken during 2014 and 2015. It was a speech given by the member for Burnett, who was careful to mention that the bill had been introduced by the previous LNP minister for agriculture, the former member for Toowoomba South.

It is tempting to ponder what has changed since 21 May 2015 given that the fee structure for new and renewed licences and amended licences are as the Decision Regulatory Impact Statement recommended—that is to say, that they are set to achieve full cost recovery. That was the intention of the previous Nicholls-Newman government when it introduced the legislation and that is why today's disallowance motion is an act of base hypocrisy.

To offer greater insight on why the House should not support the disallowance motion I would like to quote verbatim from the member for Burnett's speech. I am happy to table the Hansard record. He said—

All governments should be looking at reducing the regulatory burden and providing Queenslanders with opportunity. We want to see innovation and adaption by business in what should be an evolving industry. As a result, we have some animals that are not able to be exhibited at all. Of course, Queensland needs this opportunity and we need to be able to manage the risks that are involved. In the past, safety and animal welfare risks posed by exhibiting animals have not been appropriately regulated.

The bill will simplify how government authorises the exhibition of animals that generally cannot be kept in Queensland without a licence. Only those exhibitors who need a licence under the current legislation will need a licence under this new legislation. The Exhibited Animals Bill 2015 will consolidate the regulatory burden and licensing schemes for the successful exhibition of native and exotic animals into a best practice legislative framework by requiring exhibitors, the best people, to take a more active role in identifying and managing animal welfare and important biosecurity and safety risks that impact when exhibiting these important species.

I will end the quote there, but I recommend that everybody should read the member for Burnett's previous contribution to the debate, especially what he has to say about risk based licensing decisions. If this disallowance motion is passed by the House today the opportunity to foster world-class wildlife experiences for tourists and the Queensland community will be lost. Disallowance will mean that certain pests will be less regulated. For example, an exhibitor can apply to keep and exhibit a rabbit. However,

there will be no requirement to desex the rabbit which currently exists in the regulation. We know how important it is to ensure that rabbits are effectively managed to protect our agricultural industries. It will mean fees cannot be charged for new licences, renewal of licences or amendment to licences, limiting the government's capacity to monitor and regulate the industry.

The Exhibited Animals Regulation reforms make sense. They previously attracted bipartisan support in this House and, as we have seen, they were enthusiastically welcomed by the member for Burnett when he was a member of the Agriculture and Environment Committee which scrutinised the bill. They provide a more effective way to manage risks to the welfare of exhibited animals, the risks of animals escaping and becoming pests and the risks of spreading disease or injuring people.

I have previously made mention of the extensive consultation undertaken on these regulations. The exhibited animals industry has been consulted over a period of years on the development of the legislation. In fact, workshops were first conducted on it in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Cairns as far back as 2011. Further workshops were held during 2012, and in November 2013 industry was consulted through a public consultation regulatory impact statement. A number of options were proposed with the majority of industry respondents favouring new legislation. Fees and detailed assessments of costs and benefits were considered as part of this consultation. It was consultation with a purpose and with a tangible outcome. It was clear during face-to-face meetings between exhibitors and departmental staff that small businesses felt it was unfair that they should have to pay the same for their licences as much larger zoos and circuses. This is not a cash grab; it is sensible, needed reform, and the disallowance motion is a piece of hypocritical grandstanding.