



Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**


**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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## **EXHIBITED ANIMALS REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (8.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the motion to disallow the Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016. The exhibited animals industry is of great importance to the economy of Australia and to the education of all Australians. Australian zoos are worth more than \$540 million to the Australian economy annually. They employ more than 5,300 people Australia wide and welcome 15 million people through their gates, including 3.3 million overseas tourists. Zoos play an important role in educating the public about animals, with more than 600,000 school students visiting zoos every year. A third of those zoos, aquariums and wildlife parks are located in Queensland and the majority of them are operated as private concerns. The flow-on effect of tourists going to zoos and aquariums is immeasurable, with accommodation and food providers, other tourist attractions and small local businesses also benefiting from people visiting these zoos.

One would think that, with such statistics that show the benefits of zoos to the economy, the Queensland Labor government would be encouraged to maintain and assist the exhibited animals industry by reducing red tape and supporting innovation and small business. That does not seem to be the case with this government. The Labor government has presented the exhibited animals industry with more bureaucracy and, to add insult to injury, like most of the legislation that comes through this House, the development and consultation process has been minimal and rushed. The exorbitant and unnecessary fees that the Labor government wants to inflict upon the exhibited animals industry could see smaller zoos and aquariums go out of business.

The fee to add a species of animal or change an enclosure has increased from approximately \$15.70 to approximately \$453. According to an answer to a question on notice to Minister Donaldson, these new fees take into account annual indexation increases and charges in line with government policy. This fee increase is well in excess of 2,000 per cent which, I am pretty sure, is a much larger figure than the current annual indexation figure. Not only is there an increase in fees; there are still no clear definitions to address many of the concerns of the industry.

The exhibited animals industry recognises that fees need to apply for the processing of applications and wants to work with the state government to enhance their business. However, with little to no consultation and large increases in fees, the exhibited animals industry is bewildered by the rapid increase in red tape that is aimed directly at their industry and are asking why. Many animal exhibitors are family owned businesses. They do not have the administrative capacity to duplicate work that has already been successfully completed in previous years, such as the management plans that are required retrospectively for each species already kept by the exhibitor. Does the department have the staffing capability or specialised expertise to properly assess the huge number of repeat management plans that will result from this requirement?

I have one zoo in my electorate of Condamine, the Darling Downs Zoo, which is located at Clifton. This zoo is a privately owned zoo that is run by the Robinson family, who are passionate about the exhibited animals industry. They employ 10 full-time staff and, in 2015, had over 50,000 people through their gates. The Darling Downs Zoo supports the local contractors, who supply them with their plumbing, electrical and building requirements to maintain their facilities. The Robinsons source as much feed as possible for the animals within the zoo locally and support other local tourism businesses on the Darling Downs.

These fee changes and the requirement to generate management plans of over 200 pages for each species on each permit will mean that small family owned zoos are going to be weighed down by paperwork and red tape. That could result in the demise of many small family owned exhibited animal businesses in Queensland.

If this government were serious about small business and tourism, it would support this motion. I ask the House to consider the concerns of the exhibited animals industry and vote for a disallowance of this regulation.