




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2016

EXHIBITED ANIMALS REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (8.24 pm): I rise to speak to this motion to disallow the Exhibited Animals Regulation 2016. It seems that, whenever this government has to address issues around the management of animals and the environment, it resorts to demonising those industries and businesses involved and introduces onerous, unfair and excessive penalties and regulations. The government's record is appalling. It still does not seem to get the message that resorting to more regulation places a greater burden on businesses and reduces potential growth and unemployment. Let me make this very clear: Queensland does not have the luxury of indulging in making it harder for business to do business.

In its arrogance, the government has ignored key recommendations made by its own members who sit on and chair the Agriculture and Environment Committee. This disallowance motion has been moved because the red tape and compliance level being imposed is onerous. Many of the fee increases are unjustifiable and exorbitant. These regulations, which came into effect on 1 July, are justifiably condemned as bureaucratic, rushed and poorly developed with inadequate consultation with stakeholders.

Under the new act and regulation, operators have to submit management plans for every species that they wish to exhibit. Despite already having permits for each species, operators have to generate four- to five-page retrospective management plans. It is time consuming and simply unmanageable. Although some exhibitors may be able to group some animals together, it is still unclear what groupings will be acceptable. This bureaucratic nightmare means that a North Queensland business that has 75 different species will now have to produce 200 to 400 pages of management plans. That is despite having had permission over the past seven years for most of the species.

The fee structure appears to be an exercise in gouging by the government to make up for budget shortfalls. Queensland is not some South American banana republic where governments charge whatever takes its fancy and ignores the consequences. For many wildlife demonstrators, the fee hikes are 30-fold. The Zoo and Aquarium Association reports that some licence fees have increased by over 2,000 per cent. Other organisations have calculated increases of over 2,800 per cent. The Darling Downs Zoo advises that it will cost 600 per cent more to introduce new species.

When mobile wildlife education business Bawden's Cockatoo Chaos started, it grew over three years to holding 26 species, which would now cost nearly \$6,000; whereas before July it was \$15 to add two new species. The Fraser Coast Wildlife Sanctuary curator Ray Revill said that the cost to acquire a new species and have its enclosure approved is so extravagant that zoo and sanctuary operators are seriously having to consider closure.

The fees are based on either a minor or major change to the new management plans. However, there is no definition of what is a minor or major change. As this is a government that has absolutely no idea of what it is doing, that decision will be at the government's discretion, leaving the system unworkable and open to bias and interpretation.

These fees are in addition to licence renewal fees, which cost thousands. If existing operators want to add a species when renewing their licences, they will be charged a new permit fee—double the renewal fee. To add a species or change an enclosure, the fee has increased by over 2,700 per cent. As the fees are calculated in relation to full-time-equivalent staff employed, this increase will clearly hurt small business, cost jobs and make it harder for businesses to stay afloat, or even to establish new businesses.

Industry consultation has been tokenistic, completely dismissing the effects of these increases in fees on stakeholders. Overwhelmingly, exhibitors say that their concerns are consistently dismissed. Despite being told that the new fees were not set in stone until the regulation was put in place, the fees were increased when the draft regulation was released.

Despite claiming the laws better manage risk to animals, the amendment fees do not fairly reflect the actual risk. By pricing and classifying all new species as major amendments, the implication is that the risk is the same; in effect costing the same to add a blue-tongue skink as a tiger to a licence. Claims that the new fees reflect the cost of providing the licensing service are deceptive. Somehow it costs \$345 to add a new finch, skink or python, yet a domestic buyer using a smartphone can get a cheap recreational licence and buy the same animal from a pet shop. The government needs to talk with industry stakeholders to address their concerns and come up with practical, workable solutions and a fee structure that industry can afford. This disallowance motion should be supported.