




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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AGRICULTURE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (12.43 pm): I rise to contribute to the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I do wish to refer to what happened this morning in the business motion in this House. Speakers like myself—on both sides of the House—are effectively gagged from talking to the foreshadowed amendments on the Paradise Dam. This House needs to know when—and they need to know now—the government will table the Paradise Dam amendments so members can speak to those amendments. I will move now to the agriculture bill.

This is another large, omnibus bill amending 18 acts. However, in the time available I will address the amendments relevant to the animal activists and also a matter that is very important to my electorate, the traceability of goats. The LNP will not be opposing this bill, but we will be moving two amendments.

At last we see legislation in this parliament that will double the maximum penalty for unlawful entry of farming land in the Summary Offences Act 2005 to 20 penalty units, or one year's imprisonment. This is extended to include areas used for agricultural purposes such as an abattoir, an animal holding facility or showgrounds. I think it is also very important that saleyards should be included as well because they are particularly important to our agricultural industries and particularly to my electorate, which has one of the largest saleyards and selling centres in the country.

Only after we have seen one of my constituents' property invaded multiple times—his piggery was invaded a number of times by illegal activists—a feedlot on the Darling Downs illegally trespassed on and an abattoir illegally invaded is there now some movement from the government, who have had to be dragged kicking and screaming to address the issue of illegal animal activists.

The bill extends existing provisions in the Summary Offences Act 2005 that relate to unlawful assembly. The provision deals with a range of purposes, including animal keeping and other agriculture, where there is a risk to the safety of a person or food, where there is a risk to animal welfare or biosecurity, or there is the risk of economic loss. The bill also clarifies the biosecurity obligations of a person entering and being present or leaving a place regulated under the Biosecurity Act.

The changes that deal with the illegal animal activists and extremists come on the back of a private member's bill introduced by the LNP in May 2019. The government with all their resources have had months to strengthen these laws. This could have happened sooner. They could have picked up the LNP's private member's bill and simply got on with the job. Perhaps the delay is because protecting the agricultural and mining industries from illegal activists is not high on this Labor government's priorities.

Labor's changes in May last year, which increased the fines to only \$652 for those who breach biosecurity while trespassing, were clearly an inadequate deterrent. It was one of the questions for the Dirranbandi showgirls; they unanimously agreed that a fine of \$652 was absolutely insufficient. Here we are with the Labor government trying again, but they are falling short of meeting the community expectation. I will keep calling on Anastacia Palaszczuk and her Labor government to support the LNP's commonsense criminal trespass laws, which are currently before the parliament.

The solution is really simple: pick up the LNP's bill. That would go a long way to resolving the problems when it comes to industrial sabotage and illegal animal activists. We are really serious in the LNP. When we receive phone calls from mothers who are absolutely terrified that activists might come on to their feedlot or their property we have to be serious. We have to be really serious about protecting these hardworking farming families from these radical animal extremists whose sole goal is to terrorise those people in our primary industries. Unfortunately, Labor's proposed laws do nothing to deal with those organisations and ringleaders who are central to these illegal extremist activities. Contrast that with the LNP laws that do deal with those organisations.

I make it very clear: it is okay to protest and have different opinions, but if people choose to trespass, if they choose to terrorise, if they choose to shout profanities at hardworking farmers, they can expect to be whacked with consequences under the LNP. It is only the LNP that is serious about protecting Queenslanders from unlawful extremists who do not represent the values of our great state. Unfortunately, when it comes to the Labor government they do not seem to have their heart in this.

The bill also deals with the traceability of goats, and rangeland goats are particularly valuable. I am proud to represent Queensland's only operating sheep and goat abattoir in Charleville in my electorate. The abattoir is the largest employer. It has been operating for over 20 years. It is a well-run facility and it processes approximately 95 per cent of Queensland's rangeland goats. This export industry supports a large region in northern New South Wales and also right across south-west Queensland. It is economically critical to this region.

Consequently, my constituents have a very keen interest in any changes to the traceability of goats. Currently, the Biosecurity Act 2014 exempts feral or rangeland goats from having approved identification devices or tags before being moved in certain situations. The bill removes that current exemption. This removal is strongly opposed by AgForce, the Goat Industry Council of Australia and the Australian Meat Industry Council. It is concerning that this Labor government claims that peak industry stakeholders support this amendment when, clearly, they do not.

The Goat Industry Council and the Australian Meat Industry Council are members of the Safemeat Partnership. The explanatory notes on page 27 claim that the partnership supports the amendments relating to goats. It said—

The Safemeat Partnership ... includes the Goat Industry Council of Australia. The Safemeat Partnership supports the proposed amendments relating to goats.

This is going very close to misleading the parliamentary committee and also misleading the parliament.

A joint submission both from the Goat Industry Council and the Australian Meat Industry Council has outright refuted what was claimed in the explanatory notes. The submission said—

This statement is in fact untrue. The ... Bill has not presented to Safemeat partnerships for a position to be provided. Neither AMIC or GICA have had the opportunity to review the proposed legislation through the Safemeat partnerships, nor was either organisation consulted directly.

In its submission, AgForce also said that it was not consulted about this proposed amendment. I am extremely concerned that these stakeholders have been misrepresented by this Labor government. I am further concerned that this will impact on goat producers and processors in my electorate who process 95 per cent of the goats in this state. I have worked with goats and have a firsthand understanding of how difficult rangeland and feral goats are to work with. I do not think members opposite have had that opportunity. The government claims support for the amendment is based upon claims that an audit showed that exemptions were being misused. No-one is aware of any audit—not AgForce, Queensland's largest goat meat processing facility, the Goat Industry Council or the Australian Meat Industry Council.

If the minister has an audit or is aware of breaches regarding goats being sent direct to meatworks, then he should table this information in this House. I support the call by the LNP shadow minister for agriculture that the minister confirm in his summing up the DAF advice from Patrick Bell to the committee that—

Section 180E provides for what is known as an inspector's approval or a travel approval to be provided to industry participants to manage the movement of rangeland feral goats and other goats from farm through to depot—

it is important that it is not just from farm to depot but also other farm goats to depot—

holding depot and then through to the abattoir.

If the minister cannot confirm the advice in this parliament, the LNP suggests this amendment not be enacted until there is full and meaningful consultation with industry. This is absolutely, critically important. We cannot have a situation where the government gets this wrong. We can see that they have not worked this through properly with the stakeholders and have misrepresented the stakeholders—and that is extremely disappointing. It may not seem like a huge issue to some, but I can

assure this House that it is a massive issue for jobs across my electorate, an area doing it really tough due to the drought. Quite often it is goats and the utilisation of those rangeland goats that is putting food on people's tables. We need to make sure that it is absolutely correct and that there is no room for error, because it is a huge industry. It would be disappointing to see it unfairly impacted.