




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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AGRICULTURE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMEMDMNT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (4.50 pm): Today I rise to speak to the latest large Labor omnibus bill; this time it is the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. It does not cover everything, but it does span across 18 different acts—excluding the amendments that have been brought in here today—including agriculture, animal management and welfare, forestry and fisheries. In addition, this bill amends unrelated matters such as the Racing Integrity Commission and threatened species classification.

The LNP supports aspects of this bill which will help to ensure that individuals responsible for animal offences are held to account for their actions. This includes clarifying the definition of ‘animal cruelty’ under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 to include individuals in charge who inappropriately confine or transport animals which result in an animal suffering from heat stress or pain. Aspects of this bill align with the LNP’s 2018 policy in relation to hot dogs. It was a policy presented by the LNP which intended to deter people from leaving dogs in hot cars, thereby reducing the number of dogs which experience harm or even death from heat stress in Queensland. Our policy had the support of many Queenslanders, including the RSPCA. The RSPCA receives approximately 1,000 calls every year from people concerned about animals trapped in hot cars, and rightfully so. It is estimated that a dog can die in a sweltering hot car in just six minutes.

It is unfortunate that some people continue to put animals unnecessarily at risk of harm, and that is why the LNP felt that that particular policy was needed. However, this bill falls short in creating the financial deterrent necessary to make some people think twice before leaving their pets in hot cars. While the majority of pet owners and minders do not put their animals at risk, Labor has fallen short at ensuring there is a high penalty for those who are convicted of such an animal cruelty offence. As mentioned by the shadow minister, the LNP is asking the government to consider an amendment which would align the offence of inappropriately confining or transporting animals with the animal cruelty offence under section 18 of the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. We also propose that the penalty for such an offence should be increased up to a \$250,000 maximum fine or a three-year maximum prison sentence.

The second amendment that the LNP will be moving to the bill is also in relation to the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001. Dog baiting is already prohibited under the act as a specific offence. However, the LNP feels that the current penalties are not strong enough. Incidents of dog baiting cause deliberate harm to the animal and often result in a painful death. Such actions cause family members to experience anger and grief over the loss of their beloved pet. They also raise fear and tension amongst neighbours as other family pets may face a similar fate if the baiting is not stopped.

The RSPCA has publicly reported concern about poison baits discovered in public areas within Brisbane. There is also a concern that increased media attention of dog baiting may prompt copycat incidents and it is important that the state government provides a clear message that this type of behaviour is unacceptable and that perpetrators will face the full penalty for their actions. That is why we want to see dog baiting treated as an animal cruelty offence under section 18 of the Animal Care

and Protection Act and the penalty in place should be a \$250,000 maximum fine or a three-year maximum prison sentence for an animal cruelty offence. Unfortunately, this Labor government continues to treat animal cruelty offences lightly and we ask the government to do the right thing and increase protections for our beloved pets.

The bill also clarifies the biosecurity obligations of a person entering, being present or leaving a place regulated under the Biosecurity Act which the shadow minister covered in detail. These are changes that deal with animal extremists and activists who have come on the back of our private member's bill introduced in May 2019. Labor made changes in May to increase the fines to only \$652 for those who breach biosecurity while trespassing, and it is clearly inadequate. That is why we are here again, and again Labor is falling short. Put simply, the current laws are not cutting it and they are failing Queensland businesses and the broader community's expectation of an appropriate application of the rule of law.

It is simply unacceptable that animal extremists have been able to storm and threaten our hardworking farmers with nothing but a slap on the wrist for their troubles. Labor's proposed laws do not adequately deal with those organisations and ringleaders who are central to these illegal extremist activities and the LNP's laws do. The LNP wants to make it very clear: it is okay to protest and to have a different opinion, but if you choose to trespass and to terrorise our hardworking farmers then you can expect to face the consequences, and they should be harsh.

I also want to address the amendments foreshadowed by the minister in relation to the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges Act. The government, not content with tearing down Paradise Dam, has decided to come in here and introduce legislation with no notice to tear down Queensland's agricultural training colleges. These ag colleges provide important training and qualifications for the agricultural sector and they also support the regional and rural communities where they are based. The minister said that it was simply a formality and it formalised a decision which was made over a year ago, so then why rush in here today with no notice outside the committee process and introduce these amendments? Transparent government is good government, and that is a test that this Palaszczuk Labor government fails day in, day out. This is just the latest example of a government that is addicted to secrecy and working for its own interests rather than the interests of Queenslanders. Queenslanders deserve better.