




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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AGRICULTURE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (12.34 pm): I rise today to speak to the Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and I would like to address some key points in this important bill. Queensland's agriculture sector employs approximately 434,000 people in the food and agribusiness supply chain. This equates to approximately 18 per cent of the total number of jobs in this state. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work of and thank the people who work in this sector. They feed Queenslanders, Australians and indeed the world with our exports, often in challenging circumstances. The Palaszczuk government values and respects our agriculture industries, and that is why we have introduced this bill to ensure their protection and to provide support to our hardworking farmers.

I grew up in the Redland district which in those days—and I am giving my age away here—was known as the salad bowl of Queensland. I saw firsthand the Kunde family, the Osbergers and the Dominkos family working their land. That is why I am proud to say that we will not stand aside as farmers are harassed in their workplace and their homes as they work diligently to provide food for the community, to create jobs and to provide trade opportunities to grow our great state of Queensland.

In April last year the Palaszczuk government took action to tackle on-farm trespassers and form the Animal Industry Security Taskforce. This task force comprises senior officers and industry leaders and is tasked to identify and analyse key issues relating to animal activism and farm trespass. It is imperative that everyone is confident of their safety in their place of work.

At the same time, we introduced the Biosecurity and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2019 to directly address the biosecurity risks caused by unauthorised entry to places where animals are kept. This regulation introduced a new offence for not complying with a biosecurity management plan to prevent, control or stop the spread of biosecurity matter. It also enables police and biosecurity inspectors to issue an on-the-spot fine to protesters who go onto a farm without complying with the farm's biosecurity management plan. I can report that since the introduction of the regulation there have been fewer incidents in Queensland. This fine has proved to be a deterrent. Queensland is leading the way on this front, as New South Wales has copied the Queensland approach and made it an offence to not comply with the biosecurity plan.

The introduction of this Agriculture and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will go the next step in providing even greater protection to farmers by providing a significantly higher penalty for not complying with a biosecurity management plan. The bill doubles the maximum penalty for an offence for unlawfully entering or remaining on farmland and other specified land.

We believe on this side of the House that everyone has the right to peaceful and lawful protest. I can recall the dark days of the Bjelke-Petersen era—again, showing my age. However, we will not abide bullying and the distress caused to the farming community—including the potential loss of income and danger to their animals—that unlawful trespassing and protesting can cause. Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility, and those who do not obey the laws of this state will be held accountable for their actions.

It is only unacceptable behaviours that put our agricultural industries at risk that will be affected by the amendments in this bill. These amendments do not target nor do they prevent peaceful protests in appropriate places by animal activists or any other groups. They will apply to protesters whose behaviour puts farmers, animals and agricultural industries at risk.

Recent protest incidents, particularly an incident at an abattoir, compromised food safety measures. The expanded unlawful assembly offence will now ensure that there is an offence to cover these circumstances. The biosecurity risks posed by an unauthorised entry to primary production facilities are very significant. The animals that these protesters are claiming to protect can be severely compromised by people inadvertently carrying disease into these facilities. Similarly, people who attend a place where animals are exhibited must comply with reasonable instructions, and a person who is not complying can be directed to leave. Often protest actions can cause animals to become stressed and in some cases there have even been injuries and deaths of the animals. It does not stop there, either. Should a disease be introduced to a farm, the result can be catastrophic for all animals on that farm and the farmer. The Palaszczuk government works with the community and the animal industry and continues to raise the welfare standards of all animals.

Another significant animal welfare issue and a very important piece of the bill is that which addresses animals left in vehicles, and my colleague the member for Logan spoke about that. RSPCA Queensland reports that they receive about a thousand calls each year reporting animals being left in hot vehicles. The RACQ reported that, on average, they rescue two animals a day from hot cars in Queensland. That is 859 animals rescued from boiling cars last year, with 260 of those in Brisbane alone. We are coming down hard on irresponsibility, and under the amendments to the Animal Care and Protection Act a person may be guilty of animal cruelty if he or she confines an animal in or on a vehicle in a way that causes heat stress.

The abandonment of animals is another area of animal welfare that needed to be addressed. The RSPCA reports that they investigate approximately 15,000 cases of cruelty, neglect and abandonment annually. That is shocking; it is disgraceful! The bill amends the Animal Care and Protection Act to amend the inspectors' powers of entry to enable them to enter premises to investigate and render assistance to abandoned animals. I am sure like many others in the House, I have seen the horrific images on TV recently of abandoned and mistreated animals and have been horrified, so this is great news.

Additionally, the bill makes a number of minor amendments to biosecurity legislation to enable more efficient and effective delivery of biosecurity services. For example, it allows the chief executive to amend the biosecurity zone map as required, closes a loophole for movement of untagged goats, addresses the feeding of prohibited pigs for the purpose of pest control in addition to disease control and requires the production and retention of hard copy livestock movement records. The Biosecurity Capability Implementation Program provides Queenslanders with the tools and knowledge to deal with biosecurity threats. The bill also enables the use of body worn cameras by inspectors and authorised officers.

Last year the Palaszczuk government took the tough decision to close the outdated Queensland agricultural training college—the QATC—as a training entity and repurpose the facilities in Longreach and Emerald. We believe that students are entitled to the best possible training we can offer them to go forward into the agricultural industries of the future, and the Queensland agricultural training college was no longer offering this.

I commend this bill to the House because I believe that we need to ensure that the livelihood of our former farmers, like the Dominkos, the Kundes and the Osbergers, who worked tirelessly in the Redlands district, and those who have followed in their footsteps is respected and protected into the future. I commend the bill to the House.