




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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### **ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.06 pm): I rise to address the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill 2022. On 12 May 2022, the Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities introduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament and it was subsequently referred to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee for further examination. On 1 July 2022, the committee tabled its report with three recommendations, including that the bill be passed.

This legislation seeks to amend six specific acts and regulations: the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001, the Animal Care and Protection Regulation 2012, the Disability Services Act 2006, the Racing Integrity Act 2016, the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1936 and the Veterinary Surgeons Regulation 2016. As articulated in the State Development and Regional Industries Committee's report No. 23, this legislation primarily seeks to modernise animal welfare legislation in Queensland to 'reflect changes in contemporary science and community expectations'. On this point I note that, in his introductory speech, the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries advised that the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 had been in operation for 20 years without a significant review, prompting a review of the legislation in late 2020.

More broadly, the stated intent of the proposed amendments to this legislation are to strengthen various enforcement powers in order to address risks to animal welfare, prohibit certain inhumane practices and enable the development of an accreditation scheme to allow non-veterinarians to perform certain procedures on cattle. I also note that enacting this legislation will facilitate the introduction of a new so-called 'aggravated' breach of duty of care offence to apply in situations that result in the death or prolonged suffering of an animal.

The Queensland Audit Office had previously recommended that the oversight of the RSPCA Queensland be improved to ensure stronger inspectorate services and enhanced accountability of such services. With this legislation seeking to enact the Queensland Audit Office's recommendation, I note that the third recommendation of the State Development and Regional Industries Committee states—

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries continue to implement Queensland Audit Office recommendations in full, and actively monitor and assess the performance of RSPCA Queensland in meeting its obligations under any Activity Agreement for delivering inspectorate services for the state.

This is an important recommendation especially in light of the recent tabling of the Queensland Audit Office report No. 2022-23 titled *2022 status of Auditor-General's recommendations*. That damning report found systemic issues across the Queensland state government in fully implementing the recommendations made by the Auditor-General. It is hoped that both the committee and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries take note of the Auditor-General's recent report to ensure the timely and full delivery of the recommendations that have been made.

Taking a holistic view of this legislation, on the issue of animal protection and preservation I join with other parliamentarians in the Queensland parliament to state my unequivocal stance against animal cruelty. It is almost unfathomable that in a modern society various forms of animal cruelty can take place, including harm inflicted either intentionally or by neglect, particularly on family owned animals and pets. It is hard to believe and yet it still does occur in Queensland.

In my previous role as the Liberal National Party shadow minister for communities, disability services and seniors in the 56th Parliament, I was incredibly fortunate to see firsthand the transformational positive impact that owning family animals and pets has on Queenslanders, especially elderly Queenslanders and those who may come from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds, including those with disabilities. The overwhelming benefits of pet ownership are backed by an increasing body of empirical evidence. A 2020 report issued by the Harvard Medical School detailed a number of benefits for humans spanning across all age groups, including: the promotion of more active, secure and responsible children; and significant improvements for the lives of senior individuals, particularly in relation to combatting isolation and providing a sense of routine. Dog owners in particular have lower blood pressure, healthier and lower cholesterol levels and a lower risk of heart disease than those who do not own a dog.

Pets and family animals are also shown to have significant benefits in improving mental health outcomes by virtue of providing companionship, reducing stress, providing a sense of purpose and assisting with social interaction. There can be no question that animal protection and the prevention and eradication of animal cruelty must be paramount, yet it must be said that it is a little bit disappointing that yet again the Palaszczuk state Labor government has undertaken some substandard legislative consultation processes.

Included in the State Development and Regional Industries Committee report are multiple instances and concerning reports of the Queensland state government failing to adequately consult with key stakeholders prior to the introduction of legislation. In fact, there are even reports of industry stakeholders only becoming aware of this legislation when it was announced via the Labor Premier's Facebook page. There were close to 1,500 submissions on this legislation. That is quite considerable and not insignificant. Despite this, it would appear that the government has chosen to ignore a number of stakeholders and submitters and not meaningfully address the concerns and views that have been shared. I know that has been raised by a number of contributors to the debate so far.

In concluding my contribution today, I once again reiterate my firm support for genuine measures which seek to ensure not only the protection of animals but also the prevention of animal cruelty. As our modern society has changed, so too have many of our attitudes and expectations when it comes to animal and pet ownership. It is appropriate that legislation and regulations in this space are amended and modernised to meet these expectations. I know that in the minister's contribution he alluded to the need to modernise legislation in Queensland.

Finally, I wish to thank all members of the Queensland parliament's State Development and Regional Industries Committee for their work and examination of this legislation. In particular, I acknowledge the work of the shadow minister, the member for Gympie, in his review of this legislation and also his contribution earlier; the deputy chair, the member for Lockyer; the member for Burleigh; the committee secretariat; and all members of the committee. Again, I acknowledge the significant number of stakeholders who contributed to the committee's consideration of this legislation.