




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2022

ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (4.05 pm): I rise to support the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill. The bill provides the main legislative framework for animal welfare in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government takes animal welfare very seriously. We have a zero tolerance policy to animal cruelty and neglect and we are committed to addressing and preventing it right across the state. That is why the government engaged in the first significant review of the Animal Care and Protection Act in two decades. We want to ensure it keeps pace with contemporary animal and livestock welfare standards and practices and reflects significant changes in community expectation.

During the public consultation phase of the review in 2021, more than 2,300 people had their say, which demonstrates just how much Queenslanders love their animals. That is no surprise to me. We saw the same in 2019 in my own electorate of McConnel following shocking reports of dog baiting around Newstead. In response to those instances I held community meetings with officers of the Fortitude Valley Police Station and local veterinarian Dr Nic. These meetings were very well attended and demonstrated how deeply local people feel about the wellbeing of their animals. It was heartening at the time to see residents coming together to protect our furry friends from this heinous behaviour. The camaraderie amongst all the dog owners and the information provided on that day were excellent. I know that a lot of people were very appreciative of the opportunity to discuss their concerns and have information provided to them.

The strong public feedback received during the review of the Animal Care and Protection Amendment Bill has resulted in a suite of amendments, which includes a new offence of aggravated breaches of the duty of care with a maximum penalty of more than \$287,000, or three years imprisonment; clarification of some inspector powers in relation to entry and compliance with animal welfare directions; clarification of minimum standards for making codes of practice under the act including on the basis of scientific evidence; clarification of the scientific use of animals including alignment of the scientific use provisions to the Australian scientific use code; new framework for cattle spaying and pregnancy testing by laypersons; a requirement for dogs to be restrained on vehicles with an exemption for working dogs; prohibition on the use and possession of prong dog collars; and prohibition on the use of yellow phosphorus pig poison.

While this bill does a great job in strengthening and modernising general animal welfare standards in Queensland, as racing minister I am pleased to see it deliver a further six recommendations of the Martin inquiry. In October 2019 the ABC 7.30 Report aired a story about the wastage of retired racehorses. The story raised issues about the treatment of horses at a Queensland abattoir and contained footage that was simply abhorrent. Just as we did with the greyhound racing industry commission of inquiry in 2015, the Palaszczuk government acted swiftly. We commissioned an independent inquiry into the management of retired racehorses led by retired District Court Justice Terry Martin SC. The Martin inquiry also looked at the regulatory and oversight arrangements for abattoirs and knackeries and the transport of horses to those facilities.

The Martin inquiry made 55 recommendations which revolved around systems, policies and procedures which affect the way that the harness and thoroughbred industries operate in Queensland. It had a particular focus on the care, tracking and administration of thoroughbred and standardbred horses after their racing careers. In response, the government either fully supported, in part supported or supported in principle all 55 recommendations and provided \$6 million to support their implementation. Of the \$6 million, \$1.4 million was allocated to the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission for additional resources to enforce animal welfare compliance and to deliver a targeted education program over the four years from 2020-21.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Racing Queensland and the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission hold either individual or joint responsibility for implementing the Martin inquiry recommendations. I can update the House on the current implementation status of the 55 recommendations: 35 have been completed—and they were probably the most important ones; six more will be completed once this bill is passed; and 13 are in progress. One has not yet commenced because it is contingent on the completion of another recommendation.

The bill before the House legislates the implementation of six Martin inquiry recommendations. Three of those are to amend the Racing Integrity Act 2016 to ensure the jurisdiction and powers of QRIC over horses retired from racing but still in the care of a registered racing participant; to extend the purpose of licensing schemes to ensure the responsible breeding of horses for racing; and to improve the ability to administer the off-the-track racecourse rehoming scheme through requiring a supplier of horses to a slaughter establishment to provide horse identification data, the name of the supplier and the date the horse was supplied to the establishment and requiring the owner of the slaughter establishment to provide a report to QRIC on the identification of horses, the name of the supplier and the date horses were supplied to the establishment on a monthly basis.

These are steps in the right direction in terms of tracking and ensuring owners and trainers know their responsibility when it comes to retired animals. A lot of these recommendations are in line with the federal report on the racing industry titled *The most important participant*. Queensland is way ahead of any other state in implementing these measures. When I speak with the Thoroughbred Breeders Queensland Association's Basil Nolan—a good friend and an outstanding participant in the industry—he always comments on how far advanced Queensland is. In a way, the Martin inquiry is what led these changes.

The other three Martin inquiry recommendations that this bill implements are to the Animal Care and Protection Act: to require slaughter establishments to record closed circuit television footage at all critical animal welfare points in an establishment where horses are present and to make recordings available to inspectors; to require advance notification to Biosecurity Queensland of the arrival of horses at a slaughter establishment; and to provide powers for inspectors to enter a slaughter establishment where horses are present without consent or a warrant, but only during regular business hours.

The Palaszczuk government's response to the Martin inquiry reflects our strong commitment to ensuring all racing animals are afforded high standards of care during and after their racing careers because, after all, they are the most important part. This bill makes great strides in delivering on that commitment. It updates and strengthens the state's welfare provisions for all animals whether they are racing animals, domestic pets or livestock on a farm. I commend the bill to the House.