




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.24 pm): Queensland already has some of the strongest animal welfare laws in the country, but we wanted to make sure that our existing framework was totally up to date, current and in line with community expectations. The bill that is before the House at the moment is as a result of an election commitment that we made to review the Animal Care and Protection Act and it has resulted in this framework to modernise animal welfare laws in Queensland that will reflect the changes in contemporary science and technology and community expectations. They are the biggest reforms of animal welfare laws in Queensland in more than two decades. This is a bill for a modern Queensland and it is a bill that goes to a matter of great feeling for many members in this House and certainly many members of our communities.

We have heard from a number of members what their animals—their pets—mean to them, their families and their lives. Some have shared their own personal stories of animals and how they have had to care for them. I want to acknowledge the many animal lovers and pet owners in the Bundamba community as well as the people who look after and provide care to the animals in Bundamba and right across Queensland—our vets and our volunteers who give up their time to care for animals that need help or are in distress. Whether they are birds or whether they are cats, dogs or any type of animal, these dedicated people who give care to animals are deserving of our acknowledgement and our thanks.

I want to express my support for the banning of prong collars on dogs. I do want to acknowledge the submissions and the representations that were made on these collars being kept. Indeed, some members of the opposition and in the Katter party have restated their desire to see these collars maintained in their contributions to this debate and also in the committee report to this bill. However, it is very clear that the community has said that it overwhelmingly rejects the use of prong collars and that it considers the use of these collars to be an inhumane practice and that they do not need to be used. These collars have the potential to cause fear and pain, and that cannot surely be in the interests of a dog's welfare. The collars are designed to train or restrain animals by injuring them and the fact is that there are better ways to train our family pets.

A number of groups also raised concerns about the use of prong collars, including Dogs Queensland. The explanatory notes to this bill outline very clearly that if used incorrectly prong collars can cause physical injuries including bruising, scratching and punctures of the skin to a dog and over time this can lead to scar tissue developing on the dog and in some cases, albeit rare, prong collars have been associated with spinal cord injuries and other very severe injuries. This needs to be put on the record again.

These collars are already prohibited in Victoria. I am of the understanding that Tasmania is looking to take action on these collars as well. I note the differences in the type of political government in those jurisdictions. I find it disappointing that the LNP are looking to support the retention of these collars. They do say that if you want a friend in politics get a dog. I have to say I feel very sorry for the dogs of the LNP whose owners would want to keep open the option of fitting them with these prong

collars. So much for a dog being your best friend. I find it quite astounding. There are probably one or two members of this place who might be their own best friend, but that is another issue. The time has come to stop being medieval on our animals. That is why these new amendments that are contained in this bill will ban these collars as well as other inhumane practices like the firing of a horse or dog's legs as a means of treating injuries.

The bill will increase penalties for those who mistreat and neglect animals. There is no room for cruelty and neglect. The new enforcement powers and penalties, such as the new offence of aggravated circumstance, will penalise those who have disregard for our animal friends. Importantly, this bill also implements the recommendations of the Queensland Audit Office to strengthen oversight of the RSPCA Queensland in providing inspectorate services for the state. The bill also improves the delivery of services and how powers are exercised and gives greater clarity and accountability of inspectors. This is a significant step forward in enhancing accountability and public confidence in the delivery of these important inspectorate services.

I note that the LNP members in their contributions to this debate have called into question the consultation that was undertaken in relation to this bill; in fact, going so far in their statement of reservations to say that it was clear that the government had not consulted with stakeholders and that this raised serious concerns in the wake of the Coaldrake review into culture and accountability. Allow me to retort. There was a huge response to the 2021 review, which included the Animal Care and Protection Act discussion paper, with 2,353 responses received. There were 1,495 submitters to the committee inquiry into this bill, which are listed from pages 69 to 89 in the committee report document. That is 20 pages of submitters that are listed in the very same report that the LNP has written about a lack of consultation in. It is quite extraordinary. Has the LNP actually read the committee report? Possibly not. Despite being the best resourced opposition in the country, they are, without doubt, the laziest so it would not surprise me.

I would urge the LNP to show some integrity, to let the sunshine in and actually start to do some work and take some notice of the evidence and hard work of the members of the community and organisations that have done their work to freely participate in consultations on this bill. Do not ignore 20 pages worth of submitters by pretending it did not happen. This legislation will improve the lives of animals across Queensland without too many extra regulations for everyday Queenslanders to worry about. For those who look after their animals there will not be big changes. I commend the bill to the House.