




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2022

ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.34 pm): Like other members have, from the outset I will declare for transparency that I am the proud furfather of two of the best boys ever—that is, Aston and Teddy.

Mr BERKMAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I fail to see the relevance of the member for Bonney's pets to the debate on this bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maiwar, there is no point of order. The member has just begun his speech and there is no point of order at this point. I would also caution you that you are on a warning against the making of frivolous points of order.

Mr O'CONNOR: Poor Aston and Teddy. The member for Maiwar will not rise to a point of order on this: I would like to acknowledge the work of Animal Welfare League Queensland which we are very proud to have based in our part of the Gold Coast in Coombabah. That is where I adopted Aston from. I encourage everyone to consider adopting—especially this Christmas. This weekend the Animal Welfare League is running its 'Home for Christmas campaign' where for two days only dog adoptions will go from \$400 to just \$99 and cat adoptions, for whoever prefers those over dogs, will go from \$180 to \$30. I encourage all Gold Coasters to get down to the Animal Welfare League this weekend.

Overall the LNP does not oppose this legislation because it does include necessary updates to animal welfare laws in Queensland. Again we saw a flawed consultation process. Regardless of what views people might have on these changes, for some stakeholders to find out about this coming in through a post on the Premier's Facebook page is not good enough. It was well highlighted by the members for Lockyer and Burleigh in their statement of reservations.

One of the aims of this bill is to better facilitate the ethical use of animals for scientific purposes while ensuring animal welfare is not compromised. This is essential for so much of the future industries and innovation economy our state needs to grow. The bill will allow for people other than veterinary surgeons to perform veterinary science on animals used in research as long as they are undertaken in accordance with the NHMRC's Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. These will be things like using anaesthetic or surgical procedures. It aligns Queensland's laws with other states and territories. It has come here in response to these issues being raised by researchers themselves because they believed it was undermining their ability to undertake cutting-edge research in our state.

Addressing concerns about animal welfare potentially being compromised, the department advised that many research institutions have animal welfare officers to assess the competency of staff who will be undertaking these procedures. I have seen this myself on many occasions on many of my visits to labs, including when I studied biomedical science at the University of Queensland.

Mr Mickelberg: You have a science degree?

Mr O'CONNOR: I do have a science degree, thank you, member for Buderim. I remember some of the experiments. I think we used lidocaine on frogs legs. More recently, I visited the Queensland Brain Institute as the shadow innovation minister and I saw the mouse models that they use to research

Alzheimer's disease and the groundbreaking treatments that they are developing. They ran me through the ethical processes and approvals they have to breed and use these genetically modified mice. I can say from what I saw that it is extremely rigorous and thorough and it is, rightly, heavily regulated.

I acknowledge and respect the concerns raised by Animal Welfare League Queensland and others who believe that non-veterinarians undertaking these procedures is not appropriate, but I believe, given how costly and rigorous using animal models is, our research facilities are not using them where they can avoid it. This would simply not make sense from both a cost or an ethics perspective. With the extraordinary ability of computer models these days, I have every faith our researchers are not using animal models unless they absolutely have to.

The bill also increases the scientific use registration to up to four years instead of the current fixed three-year term. There is an alignment of the definition of 'scientific purpose' between acts and some other measures around notifications and registers. There are good provisions in the bill around the legal duty of care that people in charge of animals have in order to meet their duties in appropriate ways. This relates to things like the new offence of an aggravated breach of duty of care with the large penalty currently applied to cruelty offences; allowing inspectors to enter premises to provide relief or protection; the clarification of the meaning of 'unreasonable abandonment' to make it clear that the responsibility is not forfeited even when someone such as a neighbour has offered to look after the animal; and stopping dogs from travelling in the back of a ute or trailer without being secured. On that last point, as the shadow minister and member for Gympie raised in his contribution, having a dog unsecured in the back of a ute is already an offence under the Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Vehicle Standards and Safety) Regulation and I would welcome clarification from the minister on the necessity of that inclusion. Of course, we do support making it clear that this will not apply to working dogs that are helping to move livestock.

The RSPCA made a good suggestion to the committee about increasing the penalty for the despicable practice of dog fighting. They described the horrendous preparation that goes into those fights, which can commonly go for four or five hours before death. A maximum penalty for dog fighting that better reflects the seriousness of this inhumane practice is worth looking into to more effectively deter people from even thinking about doing it. The bill introduces new offences to stop inhumane practices such as the firing or blistering of a horse or dog—which is the application of heat, cold or a chemical to the animal's leg to cause tissue damage or scarring to the tendons or ligaments—and the use of prong collars or other prescribed restraints. I urge the minister to better consult with stakeholders in future because clearly that issue was raised by many people throughout the committee process.

The LNP will be opposing only clause 16, which would make it an offence to poison feral or pest animals with a product containing carbon disulfide and phosphorus such as CSSP or yellow phosphorous. The member for Warrego raised some excellent concerns and I hope that the minister addresses those questions in his summing-up. I agree that as many viable options as possible should be on the table to eliminate pigs and this is one of the most cost-effective poisons available. Across the state I have not met a landholder whose property borders a national park who does not have issues with feral pigs. The issue was raised with me as recently as a couple of weeks ago during our shadow cabinet listening tour to Longreach where a landholder specifically raised the ban on yellow phosphorous and their annoyance with it. I will leave my contribution there and reiterate my support for the best possible measures to improve animal welfare in our state and to do all we can to stop animal cruelty.