




Speech By  
**James Martin**

**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2024

## **AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (4.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The bill amends the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 by significantly reforming the control and management of dogs. It also amends the Fisheries Act, the Biosecurity Act, the Drugs Misuse Act, the Animal Care and Protection Act and the Farm Business Debt Mediation Act. I will focus my contribution on the amendments that relate to dangerous dogs within the animal management act.

I would like to start by acknowledging the great work of the minister for agriculture as well as his team in the department. I also congratulate the Animal Management Taskforce, which included representatives from the LGAQ and also the RSPCA. Thank you to all of the people who took the time to make submissions to the review. Voices were heard from all across Queensland. In fact, there were close to 4,000 submissions, which is a great response. People certainly feel very strongly about their pets. Victims of dog attacks and their families also feel very strongly about these laws.

Community safety is a key priority of the Miles government, and these legislative changes are a key part of keeping Queenslanders safe by preventing and reducing dangerous dog attacks. Amendments in the bill will introduce tougher penalties for irresponsible dog owners after thousands of Queenslanders backed the proposed changes to dangerous dog laws. Irresponsible dog owners will face fines of up to \$108,000, or up to three years in jail, if their dog causes serious injury or death to another person. In 2021-22, Queensland recorded almost a third of all of Australia's hospitalisations from dog attacks. Quite concerningly, children and the elderly were the most vulnerable demographic for dog attacks.

Last year, I spoke with a local from Sunnybank Hills. His name is Alexander Kaparov and, quite sadly, his daughter Paulina was attacked by a dangerous dog while walking down a footpath in the suburb. As a result of the attack, Paulina was seriously injured and may have even died if it were not for the help of a heroic local bystander by the name of Scott Dawson. I acknowledge his contribution. He came to the rescue of Paulina and forced the dog away.

Paulina had to undergo surgery. She spent a week in the Queensland Children's Hospital with severe facial and head injuries. Unfortunately, she completely lost her right ear. She needed two additional reconstructive operations to help her heal. The attack on Paulina occurred as she was coming home from a swimming lesson. She has life-long physical injuries and has been affected psychologically, as too her parents. When I met her father, I could see the pain and suffering that he was going through. He would certainly support any changes that we can make to dangerous dog laws.

There have been several other instances where dangerous dogs have attacked, for instance, workers who are just doing their jobs. I acknowledge, in particular, electricity meter readers and postal workers, who have reported that they are frequently bitten or attacked by aggressive dogs while on the job. Tragically, as we have heard other members mention during this debate, and all members would

be aware, an Energex meter reader was mauled to death whilst at work reading meters at a property in Logan in 2022. That is very tragic. Everyone is entitled to go home safe. I certainly believe that our Energex staff and posties should feel safe in their jobs and not have to consider quitting because of the risk of dog attacks. I commend all of those who shared their stories with the taskforce to help ensure that our community can feel safe.

The amendments in this bill will help to promote responsible dog ownership by: developing and implementing a comprehensive community education campaign; imposing a new statewide ban on restricted dog breeds; introducing a new offence that includes imprisonment and a maximum penalty for the most serious dog attacks; clarifying and making easier when a destruction order must be made for a regulated dog; streamlining the external review process to make it easier for councils; and minimising any unnecessary delays. Community safety is such an important issue and I am glad that the Miles Labor government is taking the right action by supporting this legislation.