




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (5.12 pm): I rise to support this bill and I want to thank the minister and his team for bringing it forward. I will try to limit my contribution to focusing on the reforms around increasing the safety of our community in relation to dogs. The government understands the importance of dogs to the lives of millions of Queenslanders. Before I continue, I should declare my bias in case there is any conflict of interest. We have two dogs at home and my wife would kill me if I did not put their names on the formal record of *Hansard*. Coco and Louie bring great joy and love to our family, so I get it.

Being more serious, we all understand the social and mental health benefits to individuals, families and the community of healthy and responsible pet ownership. Extensive consultation occurred in developing the amendments to the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act, including gathering the experiences and perspectives of dog owners and the broader community across Queensland. I thank the minister for that extensive work.

Importantly, this bill unashamedly places the priority on community safety, but that is also complemented by funding of more than \$1.5 million over three years for an education and awareness campaign to promote responsible dog ownership that recognises the value that dogs bring to the Queensland community. We want to bring our communities together on this important issue. This bill is not about dividing dog owners; it is about bringing people together and making sure we all do the right thing as responsible pet owners.

Anecdotally, Queenslanders have voiced their unease around dangerous dogs, and their safety concerns are well-founded. In terms of the stats, we know that tragically there were 53 dog related deaths reported to Australian coroners across jurisdictions between 2001 and 2017. We know that those most at risk are our children because of the behavioural and group mentality of dogs when it comes to kids. That is not a criticism of any given dog; that is just the nature of the pack mentality. We need to recognise this and I think the bill does.

I also want to thank the minister because this bill is based on a lot of research and work. It was the work of the taskforce and the feedback from the community that has prompted this suite of amendments in this bill to the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008. I think it finds a right balance.

As other speakers have outlined, there are particular breeds that are focused on, particularly those that are banned at a Commonwealth level, including breeds that have a history of being involved in dog fighting. Importantly, for me in my electorate, the proposed amendments emphasise a need for all dog owners to take responsibility for maintaining effective control over their dogs regardless of breed. The amendments will be supported by a community education awareness campaign so that dog owners can do the right thing, so that parents and caregivers can look after their kids and so that children within our community know the right thing to do.

The government is committed to ensuring responsible dog ownership behaviours are embedded into the Queensland community and become part of the normal practice. Included in that is increased penalties, especially for repeat offenders. This will ensure all Queenslanders can enjoy public spaces. This is not just about our children—as important as they are—or adults who get bitten; it is also about other dogs and other animals. This bill goes a long way to making it safe for people whether they are in suburban Brisbane or the Cape York so they can have a safe time with their pets when they are taking them for a walk, when they are playing outside or when they are interacting. I thank the minister and his team, the department and the committee for bringing this bill to the House. I commend the bill to the House.