




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2024

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (5.47 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution to the debate on the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I listened intently to all the members. There were sound contributions by most members. I am uncertain what the member for Callide was speaking on. I am sure at some stage he might want to clarify what bill he was referencing, but it certainly was not this bill.

As we know, the bill is largely about strengthening dog laws in Queensland to protect community safety, meeting our national and international fisheries commitments, supporting access to commercial fishing in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and maintaining a responsive biosecurity system. The reforms will protect community safety, increase consistency in dog laws across Queensland and provide a deterrent to dog owners by ensuring penalties for doing the wrong thing are commensurate with the harm done.

These reforms are crucial for our valuable fish habitats and fishery resources and ensure they will be protected with an effective, evidence-based management and compliance system, meeting our national and international commitments. Importantly, they will also bolster a growing aquaculture industry and enhance the management of aquaculture operations in Queensland. Further, the reforms also ensure Queensland maintains a modern biosecurity framework that is well placed to respond to a biosecurity incident; provide the necessary powers and time frames to assess the situation properly; and act appropriately to protect Queensland's economy, community and the environment.

The Queensland public has been a significant contributor to this bill both through the lengthy consultation in the lead-up to it and through the inquiry of the Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee. The widespread acceptance of the changes among stakeholders, particularly the support for our strong dog laws, is evidence that the government is listening to stakeholder concerns. I thank the committee members from both sides of the House for their contributions during the course of this debate. The opposition raised a number of matters and made a number of errors to which I wish to respond. The member for Gympie clearly was not listening in my second reading speech and did not read the government's response to the committee report which had already indicated that the government does not support recommendation 3 of the committee report.

I welcome the member for Gympie's interest in the importance of the work of the taskforce in developing these proposals and note that he shares my passion for consultation. However, I need to correct the information about the taskforce meetings. The taskforce met on five occasions and was supported by a technical working group which met 10 times. There were many councillors from not only the Brisbane City Council but also the Gold Coast city council, the Logan City Council and the Moreton city council in attendance along with my professional staff from Biosecurity Queensland. Obviously I did

not attend every meeting, but I have full confidence in my department to ensure the views of local government, animal welfare groups and the community are thoroughly considered and reflected in the outcomes.

The member for Gympie requested that I read into the record the response to a query about whether dogs are required to be controlled in off-leash areas and whether that only applies to regulated dogs. For a dog that is not a regulated dog, proposed section 192 provides that a relevant person exercises effective control of a dog in an off-leash area if they supervise the dog and can control the dog using voice command. For a dog that is a regulated dog, the more stringent existing requirements for effective control in section 192 would apply and there is no exception for an off-leash area. Just to be clear for the benefit of the House, there are three categories in terms of a regulated dog—a dangerous dog, a menacing dog and a prohibited dog—and that is quite clear in the existing act and why there were amendments made in previous years with regard to making controls more stringent and recognising those dogs, whether they be in public or within the confines of their owner's residential area.

New section 192 provides different requirements for effective control for dogs that are regulated and dogs that are not regulated. All dogs must be subject to effective control. The maximum penalties for an offence under section 193 for not exercising effective control in a public place depends in part on whether the dog was regulated or not regulated. Evidence from overseas suggests a breed ban can reduce dog attacks despite some enforcement challenges. I want to remind the member that the breed ban is only one of a suite of amendments aimed at reducing dog attacks.

In terms of biosecurity, many members made points about this issue quite eloquently in terms of what this government does to protect our precious state and the biosecurity factors that enshrine the protection of land, animals and the oceans. This is paramount and certainly a matter that I take very seriously. I am very proud of this government's record on continuing to strengthen Queensland's world-class biosecurity system. This will safeguard Queensland's food sovereignty whilst also protecting our environment and continuing to maintain market access—all of which were concerns raised by the member for Traeger, and we have not cut anyone, as the member for Gympie indicated.

The government is committed to providing a responsive and effective biosecurity framework as evidenced by the significant funding allocated in response to preparedness activities in both the plant and animal sectors. That is reflected in the funding, and I thank the member for Greenslopes for reflecting on that as well. In 2022 we committed funding of \$22 million over five years to strengthen our readiness for multiple concurrent biosecurity threats and prepare for emergency animal diseases. In the 2023-24 budget we committed a further \$21.7 million over five years to empower collective action against plant, pests and disease. Activities under this funding include escalating the varroa mite response and investing in proven activities such as the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative.

Noting the opposition's concerns about biosecurity, perhaps it would like to detail to the House how much funding it invested in our biosecurity system when it was last in government. I also note the opposition's concerns with the privacy of data collected through independent onboard monitoring of fisheries. Had the member for Gympie listened to my second reading speech and read the government's response to the committee report, he would have realised that the government has committed to preparing and publishing an information privacy plan. The intention is to only film commercial fishing activity. However, the onboard cameras may capture images of boat operators or crew members on board the vessel. Those images are classed as personal information as defined in the Information Privacy Act and Fisheries Queensland will manage any personal information collected in accordance with this act.

I turn to the comments and contributions made by the members for Bancroft and Thuringowa. They quite rightly pointed out the relevance and importance of wildlife trade operations. I reflect on the previous LNP federal minister Sussan Ley—spelt with three Ss in Sussan—who indicated that there was a need to withdraw the operations of several fisheries in past years. Given these operations, we must consider and recognise the importance as to why we need to ensure these waters are protected and that there is appropriate monitoring of the people who do their business as commercial fishers in those waters to not only protect their businesses but also ensure they are compliant with federal government requirements for the trade of the stock that they fish.

I remind the House that the government takes community safety seriously. The measures in this bill strike the right balance between ensuring dog owners are responsible and celebrating the role dogs play in families and communities. The amendments included in this bill will ensure we have the right tools available to respond promptly and effectively in the face of a biosecurity threat and to protect Queensland's economy, environment and community. I am very pleased with the support given to the bill by the honourable members of the committee. I once again want to thank my department for its tireless efforts and its commitment for the many hours it put into developing the framework of this bill

and for the consultation it did with not only the taskforce but also the committee, providing evidence and demonstrating the need as to why the Miles government needs to make these changes in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.