

Question on Notice

No. 842

Asked on 17 June 2021

MR A POWELL ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent decision by the Minister's department that has seen D'Aguilar Wildlife have to relocate its Category C2 animals to other zoos and carers at considerable stress to the animals— Will the Minister explain why the department does not try and sensibly resolve matters of this nature rather than imposing conditions that result in poor animal welfare outcomes?

ANSWER:

I am advised that D'Aguilar Wildlife was issued a licence to exhibit and deal with animals under the *Exhibited Animals Act 2015* at the Wamuran property in September 2018. The owner submitted the initial licence application declaring that the property was not subject to council development approval. Based on this declaration, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) issued D'Aguilar Wildlife with an exhibition licence under the *Exhibited Animals Act 2015* to exhibit and deal with animals at that property. Under the Act, a licence cannot be granted in circumstances where the premises is subject to development approval under the *Planning Act 2016* and approval has not been granted.

In February 2020, the department became aware the Wamuran property was subject to development approval. This matter came to the department's attention following the escape of two exotic animals (high-risk Category C2 animals) from the property. An investigation into the escape identified that D'Aguilar Wildlife had breached a number of conditions of the licence, including not meeting minimum exhibition requirements for Category C2 species held on the licence.

D'Aguilar Wildlife was informed by Moreton Bay Regional Council at this time that development approval was required, yet in subsequent applications submitted for amendments to the licence, D'Aguilar Wildlife continued to record that the property was not subject to development approval.

By December 2020, the department had no further confirmation from D'Aguilar Wildlife regarding development approval or application for approval to the council. I have been advised that a development application was not submitted until January 2021; 10 months after council staff first notified the authority holder of the requirement.

The department has held several meetings with D'Aguilar Wildlife in an endeavour to support them to rectify the situation. In December 2020, the department issued D'Aguilar Wildlife with a show cause notice under the Act. The show cause notice included providing an additional six months exemption from exhibiting category C2 species in order to allow the development application process to be concluded. Failing that, it was made clear that all Category C2 species held required to be transferred off the licence as the required council approvals for the premises did not exist.

Ultimately, D'Aguilar Wildlife did not meet multiple legal requirements and the issuing of the exhibition licence was based on incorrect information provided to the department. The matter is still unresolved after ongoing departmental assistance.

The department acknowledges that the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has resulted in challenges for the exhibited animal industry. DAF has supported the industry by providing exemptions to the required timeframes for exhibiting animals during an extended period in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and all licence holders, including D'Aguilar Wildlife, have not had to pay any fees for licensing services under the Act from 2016 to 30 June 2021.

This Government provided the *Emergency Animal Welfare – COVID-19 Exhibited Animal Assistance Program* that made available \$500 000 support to eligible animal exhibitors. D'Aguilar Wildlife was afforded this support and received \$20 000 from the COVID-19 support package.

There have been no reports of poor animal welfare outcomes to DAF. If the Member has any evidence or information of this, I encourage the Member to report this immediately to DAF by calling the department's Customer Service Centre on 13 25 23 or emailing exhibitedanimalenquiry@daf.qld.gov.au.