

Legislative Council

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PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON (17:38): As I have indicated in my speech on prevention of cruelty to animals in the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill, there is no credible evidence to support many of the government's proposed changes under this bill and, due to this fact, I will be supporting the motion of the Hon. Michelle Lensink that they be disallowed. I am concerned about animal welfare as much as anybody else. However, I also have concerns about ill-informed critics who set out to make disparaging comments about hard-working volunteers in our regional communities; people in the community raising money for important organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service. These critics with their scaremongering tactics are threatening the livelihood of our country South Australians.

As I said earlier, many constituents have contacted my office because they are concerned that there is no credible evidence to support many of the proposed changes. For example, the Australian Professional Rodeo Association believes that many of these changes have been arbitrarily set in contrast with professional opinion. I have to say that it is a claim of many people (who are facing regulation under this government) that the consultation process is nothing more than a smoke and mirrors show, if you like. Yes, the government may arrange meetings, people may attend, they may give their views and their opinions but, at the end of the day, they walk away knowing full well that what they have brought to the attention of a particular minister or minister's advisers has fallen on deaf ears and it has basically been a waste of time to even participate in the consultation process.

I have to say this relates to a number of issues (not just animal welfare) that have been coming before my office relating to legislation and regulation that this government is trying to put in place. I refer to regulation 13H(1)(a), which stipulates that an animal must have a body weight of at least 200 kilograms. The association believes that the existing weight of 100 to 130 kilograms (with the optimum weight of about 115) has been proven by the testing of cattle of different weights, which led to the approved roping device developed in the 1980s. The injury rate at this level is minuscule, with only two injuries in over 7,000 calves roped in a 10-year period.

One really has to wonder why injury to two calves in a 10-year period has received such attention to animal welfare rights from the minister. What is the government doing about the live shipment of animals for food? The minister mentioned that that is a major problem. How many thousands of animals are being transported in the most uncomfortable and inhumane conditions, and yet we have this statement about two calves in 10 years. All of a sudden, we have to be amending legislation and regulating rodeos. Rodeos are a part of Australian outback life. Perhaps city folk do not get it, but country folk certainly do—they love their rodeos. There is absolutely no logic in thinking that country folk would, for the sake of one rodeo, put in danger animals (for which they have paid a lot of money, especially now with the drought) that they have paid for, bred, spent a lot of time and energy in obtaining and looking after. If they

thought that it was going to be dangerous to their animals, I guarantee that they would be the first to regulate their own industry.

The Hon. J.M. Gazzola interjecting:

The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON: Obviously this government does not believe that anybody is capable of self-regulating; this government has to stand over and regulate everybody and everything in order to get people to comply with the image of the model citizen. The association believes that it has been singled out unfairly, especially in South Australia. APRA has a widely-held reputation of being extremely proactive in addressing issues of animal welfare. Amongst those who have supported the association is one of Australia's leading veterinarian consultants, John Cornwall, AAWS member, a veterinarian with 50 years' experience and a former Labor minister in South Australia; and Rick Symonds, Department of Primary Industries, in Queensland, NCCAW member and chair of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Committee (who, with Warren Lehmann, is currently revamping the code in Queensland). It appears that there has not been adequate consultation or feedback in the drafting of this bill. The Rodeo Association informed me that it received no response when it contacted minister Gago's office to ask about the basis behind regulation 13H(14), which requires that any horse to be used in a rodeo event that invokes bucking must be at least three years of age. I remain unconvinced by the minister's response in the council today and on Tuesday 16 October and, as I said, I will be supporting the motion of the Hon. Michelle Lensink that these regulations be disallowed.

The Hon. I. Hunter: You're disgraceful.

The Hon. A. Bressington: I am a disgraceful person. I am heartless.

The Hon. I. Hunter: Pathetic as well.

The Hon. A. Bressington: I actually care more about people.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Members interjecting:

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Debate adjourned on motion of the Hon. J.M.A. Lensink.